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THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

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THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED BY THE LATE

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PREFACE

In the Lent Term of 1908 Dr. Swete lectured on *The Parables of the Kingdom* in the course of his ordinary professorial duties. The lectures drew a large class of students, and were greatly appreciated at the time. After his death we were asked to consider the possibility of publishing them, and the encouragement received from those whom we consulted and whose judgement we value, has led us to do so.

The lectures form an excellent example of Dr. Swete's teaching by which, during the twenty-five years of his professoriate, he strove to serve theological students, and in particular candidates for Holy Orders, and the younger clergy. The attractiveness of this teaching was due to the way in which he combined in it his maturity of learning and insight with direct application to life, and clothed all in language at once graceful and simple. Such courses of lectures formed the material of many of Dr. Swete's lesser books; and we feel in giving these lectures to

a larger circle of readers that it is what he himself might well have done had he lived longer among us.

These lectures were left by Dr. Swete written out in full. Save for the removal of a few words or notes obviously meant solely for passing use in a lecture-room, they are here printed as he left them, and we have made no attempt whatever to remove the traces of their having been intended for oral delivery.

We acknowledge most gratefully the help of the Reverend Dr. W. Emery Barnes, Hulsean Professor of Divinity, who has read the proof-sheets and added the Indices and a number of references. The extracts (Greek) from the Gospel according to St. Mark are printed from Dr. Swete's own edition of that Gospel. Other extracts from the Greek of the New Testament are made from the text of Drs. Westcott and Hort, which Dr. Swete himself habitually used, by the courteous permission of Messrs. Macmillan and Co.

M. B. K.
H. G.

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INTRODUCTORY

The Parable

The word 'parable' has come to us from the Greek *παραβολή* through the Latin versions of the Gospels which usually had *parabola*, though occasionally they translated the word by *similitudo*. According to the etymology of the word *παραβολή* is the act of laying one thing by the side of another for the purpose of comparing them together. Thence, by an easy transition, it comes to mean a comparison, a similitude. In the Greek of the Old Testament *παραβολή* frequently represents *mashal*, a word which is used to cover many kinds of literary composition from the proverb to the prophecy or poem. Balaam and Job are both said in the LXX to have taken up their 'parable,' when a prophetic or didactic poem is attributed to them. The Proverbs of Solomon are in Aquila's literal translation of the Old Testament *Παραβολαί*. Even in the Gospels 'parable' is now and again used for a proverbial saying: *Ye will surely say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself;*[1] or for short

[1] Lc. iv. 23.

figurative utterances such as, *If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand*;[1] or, *The things that proceed out of the man are those that defile the man*:[2] or, *Can the blind lead the blind?*[3] But by far the most usual acceptance of 'parable' in the Gospels is that in which it stands for the longer comparisons which our Lord draws between the facts of Nature or of our outer life and the things which concern our spiritual life and the dealings of God with men.

The parables of Christ possess a character which is peculiar to themselves. Myths, fables, allegories are common in literature ancient and modern; but there is no other collection of 'parables' that can be placed in comparison with those which we find in the Gospels. Their extraordinary beauty is recognized by all; the intimate knowledge which they shew of Nature and of man is not less unique than their beauty. Yet it is not either their literary beauty or their exact correspondence with the facts of life which gives to the parables their supreme interest. That interest lies in the knowledge that they constitute a very considerable part of the recorded teaching of our Lord. Both the method of teaching which they illustrate, and the actual instruction of which they are the vehicle, are heirlooms which cannot be prized too much, especially by those who are themselves to be teachers of Christian truth.

[1] Mc. iii. 24. [2] Mc. vii. 15. [3] Lc. vi. 39.

Christ's Teaching by Parables

The use of this method began, as far as we can judge, at a particular juncture in our Lord's life. His earlier teaching had excited strong opposition on the part of Pharisees and Scribes, and was evidently but little understood by the crowds who followed Him. He could not cease from teaching, but He could change His manner of imparting truth; and this He did. *Again*, St. Mark says,[1] *he began to teach by the sea: and a very great multitude came together to him . . . and he proceeded to teach them many things in parables.* So it began; and the inexhaustible supply continued to the end of His life. If we ask the purpose of this method, the question is answered by our Lord Himself in St. Mark iv. 11 ff. *To you*, He said to the Twelve, *has been given the mystery*—the Divine Secret—*of the kingdom of God: but to those*—pointing to the crowds—*to the men who are without, the whole is done in parables, that beholding they may behold, and not see, and hearing they may hear, and not understand.* This is, as you are aware, not the explanation which is ordinarily given. Our Lord is commonly represented as having spoken these exquisite similitudes with the view of helping the common people to understand His spiritual teaching; whereas His own account of the matter is that He

[1] iv. 1.

meant by them to conceal rather than reveal the truth He taught. The German scholar, Jülicher, finds this so impossible to believe that he supposes these words attributed to Christ to be in truth a late interpretation of Christ's purpose, and a false one.[1] But there is no substantial ground for this hypothesis; the very unexpectedness of the saying proclaims it original; and I think that we can see that it is also true. The parables must in fact have veiled the truth from those who were not ready to receive it in its naked simplicity, while at the same time they preserved it in the memory, in readiness for the time, if it ever came, when men would be prepared for it. For us, to whom the Divine Secret has been given, the parables throw ever growing light upon it, and are an inexhaustible store of spiritual teaching.

It is to the teaching of the parables that I wish to direct your thoughts this term [2] or rather to the teaching of a single group of parables; for the field as a whole is too large. We shall select what I have called the 'Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven'; and by this for our present purpose I mean those in which *the Kingdom of Heaven* or *the Kingdom of God* is distinctly placed in comparison with the subject of the parable. They usually begin with the formula *The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to*, or, *So is the*

[1] A. Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1er Teil, 146-7.

[2] Lent Term, 1908.

Kingdom of God, or, *How shall we liken the Kingdom of God?* or, *To what is the Kingdom of God like?*[1]

Most of them, that is, are preceded by words which leave no doubt that our Lord intended them to have reference to the Kingdom. But this is not universally the case: the very first and one of the greatest of this series, the Parable of the Sower, does not begin thus, and yet we can have no doubt that it belongs to them. I propose to read and consider these parables first, and then to collect their teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven. Our examination must be rapid, and I must assume that the Greek text is fairly familiar to you, and almost limit myself to the interpretation.

The Kingdom of Heaven or *of God*

But first something must be said about the conception of 'the Kingdom of Heaven' or 'of God,' which underlies all these parables.

The whole teaching of Jesus Christ, at least the Galilean teaching, centres round three or four leading ideas, and the foremost of these is that of *the Kingdom of God*. It was by no means what we should call an 'original' conception; the corresponding Aramaic

[1] ὡμοιώθη or ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, or, οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, or, πῶς ὁμοιώσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ; or, τίνι ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ;

phrase [1] is frequent in later Jewish writers, and the idea of a Divine Sovereignty over the world, but especially over Israel, is scarcely less prominent in the Old Testament than in the New. We recognize this when we speak of the Jewish polity as a theocracy; but in fact it was never more firmly held than in days when the Jews were under foreign government. And it was by no means dead when Jesus *began to preach and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*[2] To those who heard Him He must have seemed to foretell the downfall of the Roman rule in Palestine, and the return of the old theocracy. That, as we now know, was not his meaning; but if not, what was it?

Kingdom in this phrase means *Sovereignty* rather than the sphere in which the Sovereign reigns; *the Kingdom of God* is the *imperium* of God and not the area or the people over which it is exercised. In the first Gospel *the sovereignty of the heavens* is usually substituted for *the sovereignty of God*. There is little difference of meaning between the two expressions; the later Jews used *heaven* for *God*, as in Dan iv. 26, *The heavens do rule*; but whilst *of God*, τοῦ θεοῦ, calls attention to the Person of the Sovereign, *of Heaven*, τῶν οὐρανῶν, directs it to the quarter from which the sovereignty would come: it would be heavenly, spiritual, not earthly. It may well have been that

[1] מַלְכוּתָא דִשְׁמַיָּא. [2] Mt. iv. 17.

our Lord usually preferred this phrase, since it struck the keynote of His conception of the Divine Kingdom.

For this is the distinctive character of the new theocracy which Christ preaches. It is purely spiritual and ethical, a sovereignty exerted over men's hearts and lives by the Divine Spirit swaying the human spirit and co-operating with it. This sovereignty is a *kingdom of heaven*, *βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*, from above, of the eternal order, and yet it has its seat in man. *The kingdom of God*, our Lord teaches, *is within you*, *ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν*.[1] This is the leading thought which the parables illustrate. I will not anticipate what they will teach us about it. We shall see that simple and easy of comprehension as the idea may seem to be, it is really complex in the highest degree, entering into all the departments of human life, and reaching forth into the most remote future.

[1] Lc. xvii. 21.

I

THE GALILEAN PARABLES OF LIFE, GROWTH, AND ISSUE

1. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

I PLACE first among the parables of the Kingdom the great Parable of the Sower (Mt. xiii. 3 ff., Mc. iv. 3 ff., Lc. viii. 5 ff.). Its typical character and great importance are shewn by the circumstance that each of the Synoptists gives it, *i.e.* that both St. Matthew and St. Luke have thought it worth while to repeat a parable which they found given fully by St. Mark. As I have said, the Parable of the Sower does not begin with any express reference to the Kingdom; but it so clearly belongs to the same class as the next parable in St. Mark and to other parables of sowing and growth which are in so many words stated to be parables of the Kingdom that we are justified in so regarding it.

Καὶ πάλιν ἤρξατο διδάσκειν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν. καὶ συνάγεται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄχλος πλεῖστος, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα καθῆσθαι ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν ἐπὶ

And again he began to teach by the sea side. And there is gathered unto him a very great multitude, so that he entered into a boat, and sat in the sea; and all the multitude were by the sea on

τῆς γῆς ἦσαν. καὶ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς ἐν παραβολαῖς πολλά, καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ Ἀκούετε. ἰδοὺ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων σπεῖραι· καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ σπείρειν ὃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, καὶ ἦλθεν τὰ πετεινὰ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτό. καὶ ἄλλο ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ πετρῶδες καὶ ὅπου οὐκ εἶχεν γῆν πολλήν, καὶ εὐθὺς ἐξανέτειλεν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς· καὶ ὅτε ἀνέτειλεν ὁ ἥλιος ἐκαυματίσθη καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ῥίζαν ἐξηράνθη. καὶ ἄλλο ἔπεσεν εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας, καὶ ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἄκανθαι καὶ συνέπνιξαν αὐτό, καὶ καρπὸν οὐκ ἔδωκεν. καὶ ἄλλα ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν καλήν, καὶ ἐδίδου καρπὸν ἀναβαίνοντα καὶ αὐξανόμενα, καὶ ἔφερεν εἰς τριάκοντα καὶ εἰς ἑξήκοντα καὶ εἰς ἑκατόν. Καὶ ἔλεγεν Ὃς ἔχει ὦτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω.

the land. And he taught them many things in parables, and said unto them in his teaching, Hearken: Behold, the sower went forth to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it. And other fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And others fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. And he said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

St. Mark iv. 1-9.[1]

[1] Parallels. St. Matthew xiii 1-9.

Ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἐξελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῆς οἰκίας ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν· καὶ συνήχθησαν πρὸς

On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And there were gathered

St. Mark's report I take to be substantially St. Peter's. St. Matthew's is very near to St. Mark's; in fact for the most part he copies St. Mark word for word. St. Luke, on the other hand, has some interesting variations; he notes, for example, that the seed by the wayside gets trodden under foot by the passers-by, before the birds are down upon it; and for the rapid withering of that which fell on the footpath he accounts by saying that it got no moisture. St. Luke, again, stands alone in mentioning only the highest rate of increase; according to him the produce was uniformly or on the average a hundredfold. But these changes do not amount to much, and they suggest the hand of the editor rather than a first-hand report.

αὐτὸν ὄχλοι πολλοί, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα καθῆσθαι, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν εἱστήκει. καὶ ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἐν παραβολαῖς λέγων Ἰδοὺ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείρειν. καὶ ἐν τῷ σπείρειν αὐτὸν ἃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, καὶ ἐλθόντα τὰ πετεινὰ κατέφαγεν αὐτά. ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη ὅπου οὐκ εἶχεν γῆν πολλήν, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξανέτειλεν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς, ἡλίου δὲ ἀνατείλαντος ἐκαυματίσθη καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ῥίζαν ἐξηράνθη. ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὰς ἀκάνθας, καὶ ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἄκανθαι καὶ ἀπέπνιξαν αὐτά. ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν καὶ ἐδίδου καρπόν, ὃ μὲν

unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach. And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon

The picture, which the parable places before us, was to an agricultural population, such as the Galileans largely were, one of the utmost familiarity. It is at least possible that the process could be seen going forward on the hills above the lake at the time when our Lord was speaking.

Behold, the sower went forth—Ἰδοὺ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ

ἑκατὸν ὃ δὲ ἑξήκοντα ὃ δὲ τριάκοντα. Ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω.

the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He that hath ears, let him hear.

St. Luke viii. 4-8.

Συνιόντος δὲ ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ τῶν κατὰ πόλιν ἐπιπορευομένων πρὸς αὐτὸν εἶπεν διὰ παραβολῆς Ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπεῖραι τὸν σπόρον αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἐν τῷ σπείρειν αὐτὸν ὃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, καὶ κατεπατήθη καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατέφαγεν αὐτό. καὶ ἕτερον κατέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν, καὶ φυὲν ἐξηράνθη διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ἰκμάδα. καὶ ἕτερον ἔπεσεν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀκανθῶν, καὶ συνφυεῖσαι αἱ ἄκανθαι ἀπέπνιξαν αὐτό. καὶ ἕτερον ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀγαθήν, καὶ φυὲν ἐποίησεν καρπὸν ἑκατονταπλασίονα. Ταῦτα λέγων ἐφώνει Ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω.

And when a great multitude came together, and they of every city resorted unto him, he spake by a parable: The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it. And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it, and choked it. And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold. As he said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

σπείρων: so both St. Mark and St. Matthew begin; and though ἰδού cannot be pressed, it was especially appropriate if the crowd had but to raise their eyes as Jesus pointed to the sower. But of course what the audience was really called to mark was the corresponding process which even as He spoke was going forward in their own lives. The Kingdom of Heaven, the invisible power of God over them, was, even as He spoke, being exerted just in the same way as the powers of Nature are used by the sower who goes forth to sow. A simple act it is—to cast a grain of wheat upon the earth; yet he who does so sets in motion a process by which, when multiplied indefinitely, men live and the world is what it is. The great Son of Man, during His ministry, was but a Sower of seed. His seeds were His words. A seed is a thing of life, inward and invisible life, self-propagating life. Every saying that Christ let drop had life in itself, and the power to produce life; *The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.*[1] But seed does not produce life of itself alone: it needs soil. Here is a second mystery common to nature again. Human co-operation must assist the work of the Sower. The sayings of Christ Himself, though spirit and life, have no effect upon a man's life apart from the man himself: the soil has its

[1] Jo. vi. 63. τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἐγὼ λελάληκα ὑμῖν πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωή ἐστιν.

part to do. Christ was sowing the seed of the Kingdom; but were these people receiving it to any good purpose? For the seed of the Kingdom, like the natural seed, may fail of its purpose, and that in more ways than one. 'Look,' the Lord says, 'at what the sower in yonder field is doing. The seed he drops falls now and then elsewhere than in the furrows—on the footpath, or on a thin sprinkling of earth overlying the native rock which crops up here and there in the field, or again into a bed of thorns. In not one of these cases does it do its work; either it does not spring up at all; or it springs up to die down again after a day or two of hot sunshine; or it grows up till it is outgrown by the thorns, which choke and stifle its life, so that the fruit does not come to maturity. Only the grains that fall into the good ploughed land bear fruit; and even here there are great differences in the rate of production, some grains bearing more than three times as much as others, according to the nature of the soil.'

What is the main teaching of this parable? It is, I think, the responsibility of those to whom the word of God comes for its failures to effect what it has come to do: the fact that man has a part to do, and that if that is not done, Christ's work so far is in vain. The powers of the Kingdom of Heaven can no more work apart from human co-operation than the grain of corn can put forth the life that is in it to

good effect unless it falls into good soil. As the sower can do no more than sow, so the Son of Man could but speak to the ears of men. As soon as the word penetrated the ears of the hearer it created a new responsibility on his part. So in St. Mark the parable, which began with *Hearken!* ends (*v.* 9) *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*; let him attend and assimilate what he hears. The parable follows the fortunes of the seed which passed out of the sower's hands; we see it lying on the surface of the memory, never really apprehended by the mind, and so presently lost altogether; or eagerly received, but not deeply taken to heart, and so wasting itself in short-lived emotions or futile resolves; or lastly, we see it taken to heart, and giving good promise of mature Christian life, but as the days go by, checked and frustrated by the growing preoccupations of the present life. All this means failure, and the Great Sower foresees and expects failure; it is one of the mysteries of life—the waste which is visible everywhere; and no waste is more incomprehensible than that of the good seed which might have borne fruit unto life eternal.

But there is another side to the picture, for there is a splendid optimism in our Lord's teaching, which while it recognizes the saddest facts of life never loses sight of the immense balance of good. The good ground is after all the normal destination of the

seed, and the honest and good heart (*καρδία καλὴ καὶ ἀγαθή*)[1] is to be found wherever the word of the Kingdom is spoken. And when the good seed finds lodgement in the good soil, good fruit is the result.

In the Parable of the Sower we see the Kingdom of Heaven entering human life through the Gospel, and the very mixed record of failure and success which it can shew. And we see also the cause of failure; it is not in the sower or the seed, but in the soil, *i.e.* in the conditions under which the mind and heart of the hearer are when he receives the Divine word. Our Lord could see these conditions actually existing in the crowds before Him; and they exist to-day in all large assemblies of men. Hence the Parable of the Sower can never be out of date; it stands on the pages of the Gospels for the use of those who are called to sow the seed of the Kingdom to the end of time.

[1] Lc. viii. 15.

2. THE PARABLE OF THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY OR OF THE AUTOMATIC ACTION OF THE SOIL

NEXT comes another parable of seed, which is peculiar to St. Mark. It is short, but not altogether easy either as regards the Greek or the thought.

Καὶ ἔλεγεν Οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς ἄνθρωπος βάλῃ τὸν σπόρον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ καθεύδῃ καὶ ἐγείρηται νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν, καὶ ὁ σπόρος βλαστᾷ καὶ μηκύνηται, ὡς οὐκ οἶδεν αὐτός. αὐτομάτη ἡ γῆ καρποφορεῖ, πρῶτον χόρτον, εἶτεν στάχυν, εἶτεν πλήρη σῖτον ἐν τῷ στάχυι. ὅταν δὲ παραδοῖ ὁ καρπός, εὐθὺς ἀποστέλλει τὸ δρέπανον, ὅτι παρέστηκεν ὁ θερισμός.

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

St. Mark iv. 26-29.

This parable is peculiar to St. Mark, *i.e.* it has not been adopted from St. Mark by St. Matthew or St. Luke, who seem to have felt that it was unnecessary to relate a second parable so similar to the Parable of the Sower in view of the large number of non-Marcan parables to which they had access. It has been

suggested that St. Matthew has given us in the Parable of the Tares another report of St. Mark's Parable of the Seed growing secretly; but the only ground for this conjecture is that there are some verbal coincidences in the two records. The stories themselves and their teaching are quite distinct. More probably the Sower, the Seed, and the Tares formed originally a trilogy, delivered in that order, of which St. Mark has preserved the first and the second, and St. Matthew the first and the third, St. Luke keeping only the first.

To come now to St. Mark's parable. Notice its special point. In common with the Parable of the Sower it begins with the picture of the process of sowing. But that process is dismissed at once: it is the subsequent growth of the seed on which the parable turns. The sower sows, the reaper will reap; but who takes care of the seed in the intermediate months? who sees to the sprouting, the maturing, the fructification? How are these things done and by whom? The whole process, as far as we can see, is automatic, due to the spontaneous action of the soil, or the inherent vitality of the germ and plant. Through the hours of night and day, while men sleep and while they work, that silent mystery of growth goes forward without human intervention; it is only at the beginning and the end that human instrumentality is employed.

So is the Kingdom of God; the laws of the invisible heavenly kingdom correspond here again with the laws of the kingdom of Nature. Let us see how this is so. Take first the general history of the Kingdom of God in the world. Sower after sower had sown the Divine word in the old world: lawgivers, prophets, psalmists among the Hebrew people; poets, philosophers in the Greek world. They passed, leaving the seed; their concern was only to sow it. In the fulness of time Jesus came, and He also sowed the word; all His teaching in Galilee and Jerusalem was this and no more. Men around Him clamoured for a Kingdom of God to appear; the Eleven, even on the day of the Ascension, asked, *Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* [1] Had they learnt the lesson of this parable, the lesson of the cornfield, they would have been ready to wait; indeed they would have seen that the sowing was in fact the coming of the Kingdom. In the same spirit they looked for the Second Coming of the Lord in their own time. But they looked in vain; and we are now in the twentieth century. One generation has succeeded another; one has fallen asleep, another has risen in its place, and the process has been repeated again and again. But through the long night of those who sleep, through the day of life, the work of God is going forwards. We can watch the stages of

[1] Acts i. 6.

its growth ; the history of the Church shews progress, and each age contributes something to the final result. But we cannot hasten the end, and we must not anticipate it. Christ waits, and we must wait. 'Keep on sowing,' the parable teaches ; 'that is your part ; leave the growth to God ; it will come, you know not how.' Thus the growing time of the parable corresponds to the whole period between the Ascension and the Coming (the Parousia),—the whole dispensation of the Spirit. The laws of spiritual growth will work themselves out silently and unseen, just as the laws of natural growth do. In both the growth seems spontaneous ; in both it is really due to the immanent power of God.

So viewed the parable is a key to what we call 'Church History.' But of course it has also its fulfilment in the individual life. There too, there is need of patience. Given the good soil of a heart which is loyal to God and welcomes His word, it will bring forth fruit *αὐτομάτη*—of itself ; not needing, that is, artificial or conventional helps, or the periodical excitements, such as the over-anxiety of men often provides for stirring up the grace of God within them, but by the silent and steady action of the Holy Spirit, mysteriously co-operating with the human will in the ordinary ways of life. Thus this parable warns us against too close a scrutiny of the inner life, too anxious a watch over its growth, too curious

an examination of its nature and laws. What concerns us is to see that the growth is not suspended by causes over which we ourselves have control, that the Spirit is not grieved or quenched; that the blade is advancing to the ear, and the corn in the ear is getting fuller as the season for growth advances and the harvest time draws nearer to our personal life.

Thus this second parable of the Kingdom of God represents the way in which the Divine Sovereignty asserts itself over men in history and in life. There have been in history, there are in life, times when human instruments take a large and manifest part in setting up the Kingdom on earth. Our Lord's own ministry was the supreme example of this; it was *par excellence* a sowing time, and the Sower could be seen going to and fro up and down the furrows of the field. We see the same thing to-day; it is the meaning of all our Church life, of the work of our three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; of sacraments and preaching; of missionary energy. All this is in the power of man, and it is man's duty and privilege to do it. But there remains the vast and mysterious process in the consciences and hearts of men which no man, Priest or Evangelist, can hasten, and in which even the Son of Man as such, in His earthly life, had no part: the apparently spontaneous growth of the Divine life in men, which is the very end of all human ministries, and yet which those who

minister cannot hasten. The Kingdom of God is God Himself working through the laws of man's nature, moulding human wills and lives to Himself by the secret power of the Holy Spirit. We sow; the rest belongs to the Spirit.

Lastly, this parable affords us a glimpse of the end. The end comes to a nation, or an age, or the individual life, when the fruit has yielded itself, *παραδοῖ*, *i.e.* when it is fully ripe or ready for reaping: when a man or peoples have reached the point beyond which they will grow no further, at least in their present state. When this point has been reached in a career we are no judges: it rests with the Great Sower who is also the Reaper. With Him there are no real delays, and no premature ingathering: *When the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come*—*εὐθὺς ἀποστέλλει τὸ δρέπανον, ὅτι παρέστηκεν ὁ θερισμός.*

3. THE PARABLE OF THE TARES
OR
OF THE DARNEL IN THE WHEATFIELD

NEXT in order to the Parable of the Seed I place the Parable of the Tares, which St. Matthew only has retained.

Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων Ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ σπείραντι καλὸν σπέρμα ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ. ἐν δὲ τῷ καθεύδειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ὁ ἐχθρὸς καὶ ἐπέσπειρεν ζιζάνια ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σίτου καὶ ἀπῆλθεν. ὅτε δὲ ἐβλάστησεν ὁ χόρτος καὶ καρπὸν ἐποίησεν, τότε ἐφάνη καὶ τὰ ζιζάνια. προσελθόντες δὲ οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότου εἶπον αὐτῷ Κύριε, οὐχὶ καλὸν σπέρμα ἔσπειρας ἐν τῷ σῷ ἀγρῷ; πόθεν οὖν ἔχει ζιζάνια; ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτοῖς Ἐχθρὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῦτο ἐποίησεν. οἱ δὲ αὐτῷ λέγουσιν Θέλεις οὖν ἀπελθόντες συλλέξωμεν αὐτά; ὁ δὲ φησιν Οὔ, μή ποτε συλλέγοντες τὰ ζιζάνια ἐκριζώσητε ἅμα αὐτοῖς τὸν σῖτον· ἄφετε

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, Nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with

συναυξάνεσθαι ἀμφότερα ἕως τοῦ θερισμοῦ· καὶ ἐν καιρῷ τοῦ θερισμοῦ ἐρῶ τοῖς θερισταῖς Συλλέξατε πρῶτον τὰ ζιζάνια καὶ δήσατε αὐτὰ εἰς δέσμας πρὸς τὸ κατακαῦσαι αὐτά, τὸν δὲ σῖτον συνάγετε εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην μου.

them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

St. Matthew xiii. 24-30.

This parable evidently paints the darker side of the analogy between the cornfield and the Kingdom of God; and the question arises why this dark side should have been depicted so early in the course of the Gospel. There was as yet, so far as we know, no falling away among the disciples: no traitor Judas, no fallen Peter; while the Ananiases, Sapphiras, and Demases of the Apostolic age were as yet not heard of. 'I own,' writes Dr. Salmon, 'I have always felt it as a problem demanding explanation, that our Lord should have dealt with this topic at so early a period of His ministry.' Dr. Salmon himself suggests what is doubtless the true answer, that our Lord's prescience supplied the intimate knowledge of the future that He shews in this parable. But His knowledge of men—*He knew*, St. John says,[1] *what was in man*—in itself would perhaps have sufficed to lead Him to foresee that there must be a dark side to the operations of the Kingdom of God. It could

[1] Jo. ii. 25.

not be otherwise, human nature being what it is. Even in the parable of the Sower there are intimations that in many cases the seed is sown in vain; that partial or even complete failure is to be expected. But the Parable of the Tares carries us further; it is not simple failure that we have here, but a deliberate attempt to counteract and so to destroy the work of God.

This is one of the two parables which are explained for us by our Lord Himself. According to St. Matthew the explanation was given in the house to the Twelve; not from the boat, not to the crowds. St. Mark tells us that it was the Lord's habit at this time to follow up His public teaching by a private instruction when He was alone with the Apostles;[1] and two samples are given by St. Matthew. It is quite arbitrary to say, as some do, that these explanations were added by a later generation, and that they embody only the traditional interpretation of the first century; they are ascribed to Jesus as distinctly as the parables themselves, and have an equal claim to be regarded as His.

How then is this parable of the Tares interpreted by Christ?

Τότε ἀφεὶς τοὺς ὄχλους ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν. Καὶ *Then he left the multitudes, and went into the house:*

[1] Mc. iv. 33 f. *With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it: and without a parable spake he not unto them: but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things.*

προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες Διασάφησον ἡμῖν τὴν παραβολὴν τῶν ζιζανίων τοῦ ἀγροῦ. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Ὁ σπείρων τὸ καλὸν σπέρμα ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· ὁ δὲ ἀγρός ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος· τὸ δὲ καλὸν σπέρμα, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας· τὰ δὲ ζιζάνιά εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ, ὁ δὲ ἐχθρὸς ὁ σπείρας αὐτά ἐστιν ὁ διάβολος· ὁ δὲ θερισμὸς συντέλεια αἰῶνός ἐστιν, οἱ δὲ θερισταὶ ἄγγελοί εἰσιν.

and his disciples came unto him, saying, Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field. And he answered and said, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels.

St. Matthew xiii. 36-39.

The antitheses of the parable, so interpreted, are striking: the Son of Man and the Devil, the sons of the Kingdom and of the Evil one, *i.e.* those who are under the influence of the Divine Reign, and those who are in rebellion against it. And the lines are bold and broad; the field is the world, the cosmos itself; the harvest comes at the end of time. What a conception is here, and what an insight, quite early in the Ministry, into the world-wide, age-long destiny of the Gospel,—a conception which even now, after nineteen centuries, is not fully realized!

But there is more. The Lord not only anticipates the course of history; He reveals what lies beyond

history, when the long 'age' has been wound up and the harvest has come. It is an apocalypse, which comes from Christ Himself.

ὥσπερ οὖν συλλέγεται τὰ ζιζάνια καὶ πυρὶ κατακαίεται, οὕτως ἔσται ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος· ἀποστελεῖ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ, καὶ συλλέξουσιν ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα καὶ τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν, καὶ βαλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. Τότε οἱ δίκαιοι ἐκλάμψουσιν ὡς ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν. Ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω.

As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears, let him hear.

St. Matthew xiii. 40-43.

This is an interpretation of the last verses of the parable, but one which we feel itself needs interpretation, and events only can interpret it fully.

Let me say in passing a little about what is apocalyptic in the Gospels. It has been borne in upon us by the discoveries and rediscoveries of recent years that Apocalyptic held a very important place in the moulding of Jewish thought at the time of our Lord.

One after another of a great series of Jewish Apocalypses has been published, and most of them in English, so that he who runs may read for himself. We have come to see that the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John are but the first and one of the last of a chain of writings which reach from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes to the fall of Jerusalem and beyond it, all of which dealt in the same general manner with the unseen and the future. And the question is not unnaturally asked, How far was our Lord's own teaching, or at least His language, affected by this literature? As to His language, there is an interesting example in this parable of the Tares: the singular expression *the end* or *consummation of the age* or *of the ages*, ἡ συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος or τῶν αἰώνων, occurs in several of the Apocalypses; and if the corresponding Aramaic phrase was actually used by our Lord, it is probable that He used it as a form of words familiar to Him or to His generation through the Apocalyptic literature. And as to His teaching on these subjects, it is quite in accordance with His method to start with what He found, to adopt as much of the current thought as contained elements of truth, giving it a wider and fuller meaning, but not rejecting the imperfect form in which it was clothed.

Let me proceed to apply these principles to His interpretation of the closing verses of the parable of the Tares. The language there is cast in the

usual mould of apocalyptic description. The Son of Man, now the glorified, exalted Messiah, is seen as the King in the Divine Kingdom, surrounded by His body-guard of Angels. They are sent forth to make the great and final separation between the evil and the good; the former are cast into a burning fiery furnace; the latter shine as the sun in the Father's eternal Kingdom. Much of this description belongs no doubt to the apocalyptic phraseology of the age; you will find somewhat similar pictures of the future in not a few of the later Jewish writings. But underneath the phraseology there is Christ's own teaching, which perhaps we cannot altogether separate from what is symbolical, but which gives to the symbolism a value which is wanting in such writings as Enoch, and the Apocalypse of Baruch, and the Fourth Book of Esdras. As we look at the imagery, the teaching begins to stand out from the background; and its chief point is this. The Lord foretells the approach of an age when all men will be seen in their true characters; when all that is evil in them must be consumed like dross in the furnace, and all that is good must shine out and proclaim itself in their very faces; when all the stumbling-blocks of life will be taken out of the way, and all evil-doers disappear from the Church; and when this is done, the Kingdom of the Son shall be merged in the Kingdom of the Father, and God be all in all.

This, then, is to be the end of the sowing and the growing which make up the present history of the Kingdom of God. The harvest, to which the two previous parables briefly pointed, is now seen to bring destruction as well as salvation. And this, because the sowing and the growing have not all been of one sort. If the Son of Man has sown good wheat, the foeman, the Devil, has followed with a sowing of darnel. If the good seed has grown and ripened, so also has the bad. We know how all this has been verified in Christian history; and we do not doubt that the sequel which for the present is clothed in symbolical form will be verified in good time. Meanwhile the parable has a present practical teaching which we must not overlook. The Lord foreknew, not only that the tares would appear with the wheat, but that the Church would be tempted, when they appeared, to try to root them out. And under the form of the parable He warns the Church, once for all, to attempt nothing of the sort.

Reasons have sometimes been given for this which are not given in the parable itself: that the darnel and the wheat, being more or less alike in form, the wheat may be mistaken for darnel; or that the darnel can be converted into wheat, if it is left long enough. The latter is of course impossible; however long you let the darnel grow, it will not become wheat. Nor is there much risk of the one plant being mistaken

for the other. The parable itself sufficiently explains the command when it adds, *Lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat also.* Pull up the darnel, and the chances are that a wheat plant will come with it. And this is after all the gravest danger which besets the exercise of Church discipline. Not that you will mistake an Arius for an Athanasius, or a saint for a hypocrite, but that in uprooting the pretender or the blasphemer, you may uproot also many whom circumstances have attached to him, but who are at heart loyal subjects of the Divine Kingdom. Our Lord's direction, however, cannot be taken to prohibit the Church from all exercise of discipline; the saying *Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained*, serves to balance the command *Let both grow together.* And the latter saying must be held to apply not so much to the public action of the Church as a body, as to the conduct of individual Christians towards one another. It condemns the ruthless severity of the Donatists in the fifth century, who, because the Church is a society of saints, would have no communion with the Catholic Bishops who did not expel those whom they regarded as sinners; and it condemns also much of the austerity which we associate with Puritanism, and the want of charity which is only too common among religious people generally in their conduct towards those who cannot pronounce their shibboleth. Suppose they are tares and suppose

you yourselves are good wheat, still let them grow side by side with you in the Master's field, till the Master Himself divides. It is the lesson which St. Paul teaches the Romans: *Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth.*[1]

You will observe how in this parable *the Kingdom* passes from the abstract to the concrete. Whereas in the parable of the Seed, *the Kingdom* is the action of the spiritual laws by which men's hearts and lives are gradually subjected to the Divine will and made ready for the Divine service, here the Kingdom has come to mean nearly what we call the 'Church,' the visible Society in which men, good and evil, grow and ripen together, and which is potentially of the same extent as the world. Thus in this early parable we already have a vision of the Catholic Church, the Church which is bounded only by the cosmos. *The field is the world*, and it is *Christ's* field[2] and conterminous with *Christ's* Kingdom,[3] and it will eventually form a part of the Father's Kingdom.[4]

It would be a mistake and a somewhat serious mistake to regard our Lord as speaking of the 'Church' whenever He speaks of *the Kingdom of God*, as if the

[1] Rom. xiv. 4. *σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει.*

[2] *in thy field: ἐν τῷ σῷ ἀγρῷ.*

[3] *out of his Kingdom: ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ.*

[4] *in the Kingdom of my Father: ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν.*

two were altogether identical; more generally it is the invisible rule of the Spirit of God which seems to be in His mind. But there are parables where the Church comes clearly into view, and this is one of them. And it is very wonderful to see how exactly our Lord has foreseen the course which Church history would take, not indeed in detail, but in its main features. The prescience which has seen so clearly its course so far, may surely be trusted when it goes on to describe how all will end. The eschatology of the parable is confirmed by the fulfilment before our eyes of that part which relates to the past and the present.

On one detail in the eschatology I must say something. The Lord speaks of the future life, that which lies beyond the consummation, the end (ἡ συντέλεια), as being passed in the Kingdom of His Father. The Church in the world is His Kingdom; and the Father's Kingdom is beyond, issuing out of it. This seems to be exactly what St. Paul has in mind when he writes, *When all things* (τὰ πάντα, the universe of things) *shall have been subjected to him* (the Son), *then even the Son himself shall be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all.*[1] The Kingdom of God, or of Heaven, is, in its origin and end, the Kingdom of the Father: *Our Father*, we pray, *Thy Kingdom come.* But the

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 28.

Kingdom of the Father can come only through the Kingdom of the Son; the Spirit of God leads men to the Son, that through the Son they may be brought at last to the Father. There is something to come beyond this present life of the Spirit, beyond the history of the visible Church, beyond even the complete subjugation of the world to Christ. All these are a means to an end, and the end is that God may be all in all. Of that final merging of all in the Kingdom of the Father, that subjection of the Son Himself to the Father, we can form no adequate idea: but it is undoubtedly represented in the New Testament as the final issue of all saintly life and missionary work, even of our Lord's work and of the Holy Spirit's work, the supreme end for which we are to live and pray.

4. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

THERE is yet one more parable in which the vegetable world with its process of growth and plant life is used to represent the nature of the Divine Kingdom. It is the parable of the Mustard seed, which is found in all the Synoptists, but in slightly different forms, and in St. Luke in a different context. Let us take it as we find it in St. Mark.

Πῶς ὁμοιώσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἢ ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν	*How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in*

παραβολῇ θῶμεν; ὡς κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃς ὅταν σπαρῇ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, μικρότερον ὂν πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς —καὶ ὅταν σπαρῇ, ἀναβαίνει καὶ γίνεται μεῖζον πάντων τῶν λαχάνων καὶ ποιεῖ κλάδους μεγάλους, ὥστε δύνασθαι ὑπὸ τὴν σκιὰν αὐτοῦ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνοῖν.

what parable shall we set it forth? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

St. Mark iv. 30-32.[1]

Both St. Matthew and St. Luke seem to have endeavoured to remove what looked like exaggeration

[1] PARALLELS. ST. MATTHEW xiii. 31, 32.

Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔσπειρεν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ· ὃ μικρότερον μέν ἐστιν πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων, ὅταν δὲ αὐξηθῇ μεῖζον τῶν λαχάνων ἐστὶν καὶ γίνεται δένδρον, ὥστε ἐλθεῖν τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατασκηνοῖν ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.

ST. LUKE xiii. 18, 19.

Τίνι ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ τίνι ὁμοιώσω αὐτήν; ὁμοία ἐστὶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔβαλεν εἰς κῆπον ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ ηὔξησεν καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς δένδρον, καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατεσκήνωσεν ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ.

Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I liken it? It is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his own garden; and it grew, and became a tree; and the birds of the heaven lodged in the branches thereof.

in St. Mark's version of the parable. St. Matthew writes simply *When it has grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree*, and St. Luke omits all reference to the smallness of the seed, and merely says that *It grew and came to be a tree.* But the emphatic, popular, even extreme way (I borrow a word from Dr. Sanday) of putting a case is characteristic of our Lord's Galilean teaching, and I have little doubt that the original is forcibly represented by St. Mark's *Though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth . . . becometh greater than all the herbs*, the sense being *There is no other seed of its kind so small, and no herb grows so tall.* The mustard seed was proverbial for its tiny size compared with that of other seeds which produce equally large plants; the proverb occurs again in St. Matthew xvii. 20, St. Luke xvii. 6, in the Talmud and in the Koran. The plant grows occasionally to a height of eight or even twelve feet, and is then, as St. Matthew says, quite a tree, with strong branches on which a bird can perch; and as a matter of fact it has been noticed that when the fruit ripens the birds do so in flights, for the sake of the seeds. As it stands in St. Mark therefore the picture is on the whole faithful to nature; and St. Luke's effort to make it more so—he did not know Palestine so well—leads him to miss (as we shall see) one of the main points of the parable.

At the outset you will notice that this parable

speaks not of many seeds (as the previous ones) but of a single grain. We have before us but a single object, not a multitude, and the growth of one plant, not the ripening together of all. Our attention is concentrated on a solitary seed, one of the very smallest, one proverbially small. Let it be isolated, taken by itself, and put into a field (Mt.), or better still a garden (Lc.) where it will have a chance of being undisturbed, and where it can be watched. And what do we find? By an indubitable law of growth it mounts up (*ἀναβαίνει*, Mc.), is soon taller than many a plant from bigger seed, and grows into a tree.

Such, Christ teaches, is the Kingdom of Heaven, viewed as a unity: in its beginnings, such as men saw in Himself and His little band of disciples, small, infinitesimally small to the outward eye. Compare the band of Galilean peasants, headed by a Carpenter from Nazareth, with the great doctors of the law at Jerusalem; with the empire and state of Augustus; with all the pageant, over which the Lord's eyes swept, of coming empires and kings; how insignificant the former seemed. But the insignificant band of Christ's followers was as a seed, and the seed was a life, and it was of the nature of that life to grow and grow until it filled the world. And the time would come when the great ones of the earth would be glad to come and take shelter under the shadow of the Divine Kingdom as it manifested itself in the Church.

The reference is to Dan. iv. 12, *The beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heavens dwelt in the branches of it*, where Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is described by a like figure.

So interpreted, this parable is a picture of the expansion of Christianity, the final domination of Christianity ; and it has been realized again and again in European history. In the first instance it was meant, I think, as a warning to those who heard our Lord not to despise the apparent smallness of the work which Jesus was doing in Galilee, and as an encouragement to His disciples not to succumb under opposition. It is like that other saying *Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*[1] Only the parable suggests that this is not a matter simply of an arbitrary Will, but of the working out of a natural law ; as the mustard seed must grow, so surely must the Kingdom of Heaven ; the principles that Jesus instilled cannot fail to spring up, and must become a tree of life to mankind.

But of course what is true of the Kingdom of God in the world, is also true in its measure of the same Kingdom in individuals. The beginnings of grace in a man are small ; whether you look at the work which was going on in the hearts of the Twelve, or at the gift of the new birth in Baptism, a mere seed

[1] Lc. xii. 32.

dormant in the soil of the infant life, or at the first stirring of better desires in the baptized man or woman who has been for years living without God. The beginnings in each case are small, even imperceptible; the end, if the seed is suffered to grow, is 'eternal life,' the restoration of the whole man to fellowship with God and the glory of God.

It is in fact a first principle of the Kingdom of God, of God's manner of acting and of ruling the world, that He begins with small things, and makes them great, greater far than the greatest things among men. You remember that magnificent paradox of St. Paul in 1 Cor. i. where we have a list of things which God chooses and uses: *the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, and the things that are despised,* τὰ μωρά, τὰ ἀσθενῆ, τὰ ἀγενῆ, τὰ ἐξουθενημένα ending at last with *the things that are not,* τὰ μὴ ὄντα things which are regarded by men as having no substantial existence (he does not say τὰ οὐκ ὄντα, *the things which have no real existence at all*). No instrumentality is too feeble for God; indeed, in the Divine Kingdom there is an actual preference shewn for things that are feeble as a vehicle for Divine power. It is the least of all seeds that produces the greatest of herbs; it was the feeblest of all beginnings, preaching to simple folk in a remote province, preaching simple truths about God as our Father, ending all with the death of the Cross—it

was from this that the greatest of all religions, the mightiest spiritual force in the world, took its rise. So the Gospel of the Kingdom corrects all our false estimates of things; we learn from it that mere size, strength, money-value, are of no weight in comparison with goodness, righteousness, truth, the Kingdom of God in a man or in a system. For the latter have within them an inherent vitality which not only must live but must grow for ever.

5. THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

In St. Matthew xiii. 33 and St. Luke xiii. 20 f. the parable of the Mustard plant is followed by the parable of the Leaven. It is given by both in almost identical terms:

Ἄλλην παραβολὴν ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς· Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ζύμῃ, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἐνέκρυψεν εἰς ἀλεύρου σάτα τρία ἕως οὗ ἐζυμώθη ὅλον.

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

St. Matthew xiii. 33.[1]

[1] Parallel. St. Luke xiii. 20, 21.

Καὶ πάλιν εἶπεν Τίνι ὁμοιώσω τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ; ὁμοία ἐστὶν ζύμῃ, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἔκρυψεν εἰς ἀλεύρου σάτα τρία ἕως οὗ ἐζυμώθη ὅλον.

And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

Next to the outdoor process of sowing, growth, and harvest, there was no more universal spectacle in Palestine than the woman mixing and kneading up her yeast with the dough. It is the one great distinctive sign of the Paschal Feast that no leaven was to be found for eight days in any Jewish house ; at other times the practice was universal, and could be observed daily. It is such daily occurrences, such obvious object lessons that our Lord chooses ; there is nothing recondite in His choice of similitudes ; the Kingdom of Heaven is to enter every man's life, and it finds its analogies in the life it enters, and not in things remote from it. It is interesting, too, that He selects His scenes from the life of the Galilean woman, as well as from that of the man. The man is at his work in his field or garden, the woman at her oven ; and there is a parable which answers to each ; just so in St. Luke xv., that other great chapter of parables, the woman finds her lost coin, as the man his lost sheep. It is evident, I think, that women as well as men were among the crowds, and that the Lord welcomed them and purposely drew some of His illustrations from the surroundings of each sex.

The leaven, however, is capable of two very opposite uses as an illustration. The ancients regarded fermentation as a species of corruption, and therefore made leaven a figure of moral evil, and it is so used

both in the Old and New Testaments. Under the Law no leaven was allowed in any offering made upon the altar,[1] doubtless for this reason; and the same feeling, perhaps, lay at the root of the prohibition of leaven in the Passover week. It is interesting to find that a similar aversion to leaven exists in the Old Roman religion: for example, that most distinguished of Roman priestly officials, the Flamen Dialis, was forbidden to eat leavened bread.[2] The New Testament recognizes this aspect of leaven, as when St. Paul exhorts, *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, the leaven,* as he says below, *of malice and wickedness.*[3] And our Lord Himself spoke deprecatingly of *the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees,* meaning their pernicious doctrine.[4] This is indeed the prevalent view of leaven in the New Testament. Considered as a type of moral energy, its connotation is on the whole decidedly bad. For this reason some have taken the Parable of the Leaven as a prophecy of the spread of evil through the Church until the whole was corrupted: a very much worse version of the teaching of the Parable of the Tares, for in the

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 25; Lev. ii. 11.

[2] Plutarch writes (*quaest. Rom.* § 109, ed. Teubner): *ἡ δὲ ζύμη καὶ γέγονεν ἐκ φθορᾶς αὐτή, καὶ φθείρει τὸ φύραμα μιγνυμένη.*

[3] 1 Cor. v. 6 ff. *οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ; ἐκκαθάρατε τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην . . . κακίας καὶ πονηρίας.*

[4] Mt. xvi. 6, 12.

Tares evil is represented as merely mixed with the good, in whatever proportions, whereas in the Leaven, if we hold their view, it is represented as finally triumphant and universally disseminated, the whole Kingdom of God on earth being leavened by it. But that is very far from being the prospect which our Lord holds out to His Church; whatever dark ages may come, evil is in the end to be conquered and not to conquer. Hence in this parable we must not press the idea of corruption which usually adheres to leaven, but think only of its characteristic power of spreading through a mass far greater than itself, and changing it, making the rest like itself.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven: it is a principle endowed with a subtle power of spreading itself through society and transforming it. Look at the process as it is exemplified in the case of leaven. A woman takes a small piece of leavened dough, reserved from yesterday's baking, buries it in a great lump of the unleavened, then kneads it all up and leaves the leaven to work. So the life and teaching of the Incarnate Son were dropped into the mass of human society, and left to work; and the leavening process began which has gone forward from generation to generation, and will go forward till the whole is leavened with the principles of the Divine life.

This is far from being merely another way of representing the spread of the Kingdom of Heaven

from small things to great which is foretold in the Parable of the Mustard Seed. The Mustard Seed, like the other parables of sowing, represents the law of growth as it is common to the vegetable and the spiritual kingdom. But the leaven does not in this sense grow; it makes its way through an alien mass, changing its character by a pervasive influence. This is quite a new view of the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is complementary to the former. Its progress is like that of a growing plant; but it is also like that of a permeating, a spreading influence. The Kingdom grows by its own inherent vitality, but it grows also by assimilating to itself that which has hitherto been of a different nature and even hostile to it. There was nothing in common use which so clearly illustrated this property as leaven; and so, notwithstanding the bad reputation which leaven had in symbolism, the Lord did not hesitate to use it for His own purpose. Good, He would say, spreads as well as evil, if not so fast. In Israel under the Law the Kingdom of God had not spread to other nations, for even the Dispersion merely sought to bring people of other nations over to the Israelite fold; there was no effort made to influence without proselytizing them. But the new Kingdom was not to be such; the men whom it dominated were to remain in their own homes and influence those around them, until the whole Empire, the whole world, the

whole lump of humanity was leavened by the faith and moral teaching of Jesus Christ.

This parable may be applied also to the individual life. Christianity when it is hidden deep in a man's heart like leaven in dough, cannot lie inactive there; it spreads through his entire being, gradually bringing every power, intellect, affections, will, under obedience to Christ. If this is not so, the reason must be that the leaven lies as yet on the surface of the man's nature, and has not sunk into his heart; once there, it must work on to its goal, which is the sanctification of our whole nature, body, soul, and spirit.[1]

The next two parables in St. Matthew again form a pair, dealing with the Kingdom of Heaven in the individual life. They follow the interpretation of the Parable of the Tares, which was given to the disciples in the house, so that they were perhaps spoken not to the crowd but to the Twelve; but this must remain uncertain. Both are peculiar to St. Matthew. Let us take the first.

[1] 1 Thess. v. 23.

6. THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν θησαυρῷ κεκρυμμένῳ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, ὃν εὑρὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔκρυψεν, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτοῦ ὑπάγει καὶ πωλεῖ ὅσα ἔχει καὶ ἀγοράζει τὸν ἀγρὸν ἐκεῖνον.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

St. Matthew xiii. 44.

This again is built upon an incident which, if not of daily happening, is not uncommon in Eastern lands. A labourer, breaking up new soil, or going deeper than others have gone, strikes something hard, which rings under his pick-axe. He finds it to be an old wine jar, perhaps carefully sealed, but when the seal is broken, there comes out not wine, but gold and silver coins of three or four centuries ago. In lands where banks were not yet and where life and property were insecure, the owner of property was often at a loss how to dispose of it safely. A part of it was often buried in a place which the man did not make known even to wife or son; if he died leaving his secret untold, the treasure might lie under the soil for generations, till by a mere chance it was turned up by some peasant ploughing or digging. There were even people who spent their time in digging up waste land on the mere chance of striking

on such treasures,[1] but the man in the parable seems to have happened upon it by accident. But he does not at once tell all the world of the treasure which he has found, nor carry it to the nearest magistrate and surrender it. He dissembles his joy, but it moves him to take a momentous step. He sells his little all; it is just enough to buy the field, and the land is his, with all in it. So he becomes possessor of the treasure, and that done, cares nothing for the sacrifice he has made.

How is this parable to be interpreted? The points it seized are evidently, first, the man's unexpected and joyful discovery of the treasure, and then the cheerful sacrifice of all he has in order to make it his own. The treasure answers of course to the spiritual riches, the fuller and higher life, which comes to a man through believing and obeying Christ; a treasure hidden till the man himself finds it, and found often as it were by the merest accident. The man is simply digging as usual in his field, engaged in the ordinary work of life, when the discovery flashes upon him; it may be in a sermon, or in a page of the Gospels which he has read hundreds of times before, or even in the workings of his own mind under the action of the Holy Spirit. When the Kingdom of God comes thus to a man, it compels sacrifice;

[1] Job iii. 21 speaks of those who 'long for death . . . and dig for it more than for hid treasures'; so Proverbs ii. 4, 'If thou seek wisdom as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures.'

it may be, the sacrifice of everything. He sees things in a new light; the treasure must be secured at all costs, and he goes through with the business till it is done. The Lord evidently has in view the sacrifice to which He had called the Twelve, and was calling all who followed Him. It is the teaching of that hard saying, *Whosoever of you forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple*,[1] and many more sayings of the Galilean ministry to the same effect. Yet in the Parable of the Hid Treasure, this great sacrifice is not imposed as a duty, but represented as an act inspired by the very joy of the great discovery: *For joy thereof . . . he selleth all that he hath.* And we see how provident, how businesslike, the man's conduct really is: he gains very much more than he lost. No doubt the ethics of his conduct are not beyond criticism, for he bought the field for far less than its real worth from an unsuspecting owner. But in this parable, as in some others, we are not concerned with the ethical standard of the characters: indeed doubtful ethics cannot help towards acquiring the heavenly treasure. All that has to be considered is the greatness of the sacrifice and its wisdom; he who counts *all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ*[2] counts correctly, for so they are in the reckoning of eternity.

We have then in this Parable of the Treasure a

[1] Lc. xiv. 33. [2] Phil. iii. 8.

similitude of what happened with especial frequency in the first days: the days when men literally left kindred and property and life itself for Christ's sake. Doubtless it was meant to prepare the Apostles and first generation of believers for the extreme sacrifices which awaited them; but it was so incomparably great that for its sake they might well *take joyfully the spoiling of their goods*[1] and even the loss of their lives. But even in our own days the principle of the parable still holds good. Just in so far as men discover their faith for themselves, as the Kingdom of God comes upon them like hid treasure, revealing itself in the experience of life, they are ready to make sacrifices for it; and in proportion as they make sacrifices for it, the treasure becomes really theirs.

7. THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

The second parable of this pair strikes the same note of sacrifice, but the circumstances are partly different.

Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐμπόρῳ ζητοῦντι καλοὺς μαργαρίτας· εὑρὼν δὲ ἕνα πολύτιμον μαργαρίτην ἀπελθὼν πέπρακεν πάντα ὅσα εἶχεν καὶ ἠγόρασεν αὐτόν.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

St. Matthew xiii. 45, 46.

[1] Heb. x. 34.

This may seem to be an exception to the rule that the parables represent common facts and scenes; for the Holy Land had no pearl fishery. But the Red Sea has beds of the pearl oyster, and the pearl was in high repute in Galilee and elsewhere in the East in our Lord's time: *Cast not your pearls before swine* [1] was a proverb which appealed to those who heard the Sermon on the Mount; the woman of fashion in St. Paul's Epistle [2] decks herself out with pearls, gold and costly raiment; the gateways of the New Jerusalem in St. John's vision [3] are made of monster pearls. Doubtless the pearl merchant was to be seen on the great roads of Galilee, passing between Herod's capital and Tiberias, and the other great cities of the North, Damascus, Sidon, and Tyre. The merchant in the parable sought *goodly* pearls, fine specimens, and with these he was content. But one day he was offered a pearl far beyond all others in value, and he was determined to have it. As the peasant sold all that he had to buy the field where the treasure lay hid, so the merchant parted with all his stock in trade, all the goodly pearls he had been at such pains to acquire, for the sake of the one which excelled them all. Better be the owner of that one, than of a whole sackful of inferior gems!

[1] Mt. vii. 6.
[2] 1 Tim. ii. 9; cf. Apoc. xvii. 4.
[3] Apoc. xxi. 21.

This parable, it is evident, is meant to be complementary to the parable of the Treasure. That lays emphasis on the finding, this upon the seeking; that on the richness of the treasure found, this on its superior beauty. There is no reason why seeking and finding should not be combined in one experience, in fact, it is normal for them to be combined—*he that seeketh findeth*—but it often happens that one or the other is more prominent in particular lives. The merchantman seeking goodly pearls is one who has definite aims in life, and whose aims are high: he is one with a high moral standard, or with great intellectual ideals; he seeks not only the pearls of life but the goodly pearls, the best of them, the bright and noble things in art, poetry, philosophy, learning, or heroism, philanthropy; *whatsoever things are true ... honourable ... just ... pure ... lovely ... of good report*: on all these things he thinks, and he does well. But one day his ambition is fired by the sight of a yet goodlier pearl: the Kingdom of Heaven cuts across his path, and all his spiritual and intellectual stock-in-trade is as nothing in his eyes if he can gain it. Henceforth he seeks first the Kingdom and righteousness of God, and there is no sacrifice he will not make for the sake of acquiring them. And such a man has much to sacrifice, far more than the ordinary man. The parable, if we may press it, suggests that the pearl merchant actually parts with all his other

pearls to gain this one. But in the case of the Kingdom of Heaven there is usually no such necessity ; the spiritual merchant may well keep all goodly and noble things he already has, if only he subordinates them to the Kingdom ; he may become the Christian artist, poet, philosopher, scholar, the Christian hero or philanthropist ; all these things are taken up into his Christian life and made a part of it. Still even in such a case there will be a sacrifice to be made for the sake of acquiring the precious pearl, and there is no sacrifice which the man who has seen it would not, if needful, gladly make. This, then, he has in common with the labourer, *i.e.* the uneducated, ungifted Christian, who finds the hoard of gold and silver coins ; but he has this over and above, that his educated sense of beauty finds satisfaction in the glory of his new acquisition. The gold and silver appeals to the labourer, the pearl to the merchant. So it is that the Kingdom of Heaven makes its appeal quite differently to men of different capacities and mental equipments : to the converted coal-heaver or cobbler, who appears on a revivalist platform, and to the cultivated man who has quite other standards of value. To the latter it is the exquisite beauty of our Lord's life that appeals, or the correspondence of the Gospel with the deepest needs of men ; whereas the former is attracted by the sense of personal salvation which he desires. Neither of the two can

quite sympathize with the other's standard ; and yet they are both drawn to the one Christ. I ask you to note how this great fact of the many-sidedness of Christianity, its power of winning and satisfying people of different views and even opposite temperaments, and antecedents, was anticipated by our Lord ; it was indeed part of His plan for the recovery of the world, and it finds a place in the teaching of these two parables, when they are compared together and we note how much they have in common, and yet how the circumstances differ.

8. THE PARABLE OF THE DRAW-NET

St. Matthew's great chapter of parables closes with a parable, the seventh in his series, which represents the end of the present seeking and finding.

Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν σαγήνῃ βληθείσῃ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ ἐκ παντὸς γένους συναγαγούσῃ. ἣν ὅτε ἐπληρώθη ἀναβιβάσαντες ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν καὶ καθίσαντες συνέλεξαν τὰ καλὰ εἰς ἄγγη, τὰ δὲ σαπρὰ ἔξω ἔβαλον.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind : which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach ; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away.

St. Matthew xiii. 47, 48.

As the series began with corn-growing, the prevalent business of the hills round the Lake, so it ends with

a scene which must have been one of the most common on the shores of the Lake. The western shore was the fishing ground of Palestine; the freshwater fishes of Palestine are singularly numerous—twenty-two species have been counted peculiar to the country—and in the sunny hollow of the Sea of Galilee they lie in shoals. Thus it came to pass that fishermen formed a large part of the population of all the towns on the Lake and fish its chief food; while at Taricheae, at the S.W. end, there was a local trade of salting down fish, and the dried fish of the Lake were sold in the streets of Jerusalem and probably exported to other countries. The fishing industry was carried on partly in boats from which the fish were caught in throw-nets (ἀμφίβληστρα), but also partly from the shore by means of draw-nets (σαγῆναι) or 'seines,' as they call them still in Cornwall. The two sorts of nets are mentioned together in Habakkuk i. 15: *He catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag.*[1] You will notice the difference: while the throw-net retained safely enough all that got inside it, unless indeed it broke before it could be pulled up or brought to land, the 'drag' or draw-net kept on getting more and more, sweeping the bottom of the sea clean as far as it went. Hence the draw-net would probably shew not only a larger haul, but a

[1] εἵλκυσεν αὐτὸν ἐν ἀμφιβλήστρῳ, καὶ συνήγαγεν αὐτὸν ἐν ταῖς σαγήναις αὐτοῦ.

more varied one, gathering *of every kind.* In the fishing scenes of St. Luke v. and St. John xxi. it is the throw-nets that are used; here, for various reasons which will appear, the Lord chooses the draw-net.

Few scenes could have been more familiar than the sorting that followed the drawing in of the net. All of us know the fascination of watching the incoming of the great draw-net; the gradual contraction of the semi-circle of corks which at first floats far out on the water, but is at last drawn in to the shore; then at last, as the net comes up, the great seething mass of silver fish, leaping and struggling, as they are disgorged upon the bank. A ring of spectators gathers round, while the fish are hastily handled by the squatting men; the good, edible, sorts, fit for sale or for use, are collected in buckets, while the worthless, undersized, inedible, are flung aside into the sea or at a distance on the shore. Then there is a rapid counting of the result: that morning after the resurrection when Jesus bid the seven cast the net (δίκτυον) on the right side of the boat, the number was 153 large fish, and it was noted as wonderful that such a haul did not break the net; but the net in the Parable was the much larger seine (σαγήνη) and the take would be proportionally great. However, the sorting and counting soon come to an end, and then the fish that are worth keeping are sent off to

Taricheae to be salted down, or to the fish markets of Tiberias and Capernaum, and the fishermen go off to their rest, or to fresh tasks elsewhere.

And now the interpretation. It is partly given by the Lord Himself, as in the case of the Parables of the Sower, and the Tares.

οὕτως ἔσται ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος· ἐξελεύσονται οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ ἀφοριοῦσιν τοὺς πονηροὺς ἐκ μέσου τῶν δικαίων καὶ βαλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

St. Matthew xiii. 49, 50.

The last two clauses are exactly the same as the last two in the interpretation of the Tares, though there is nothing in the Parable of the Draw-net which suggests the fiery furnace or the wail of suffering; the refuse on the shore is not burnt, but carried away by the next storm. It may be that these clauses were no part of the original report, but were added as a kind of refrain by the person who collected the parables together. In any case I have already said about these terrible words all that I have to say to you, and so I will not notice them now. Enough remains to give us a lead as to the purpose of the Parable of the Draw-net.

The Lord sees a portion of the great sea of life

enclosed by a net, the operation of which in some way answers to the Kingdom of Heaven; this net remains where it is to the end of the present order. It is difficult not to see in the Draw-net the great Christian society, the Church, which was already within His view (as we learn from St. Matthew xiii. 18; xviii. 17); indeed He knew Himself about to send it into all the world to draw men into the Kingdom. The Church by its very constitution as a Society, with visible bonds of union in the Sacraments, encloses men as in a net, from which they cannot wholly escape, though the spaces within her great circumference are so wide that men may be and often are unconscious that they are not absolutely free. And the Church remains from the beginning to the end, amidst storms and calms, quietly engaged in the work of enclosing souls; so quietly that the world hardly takes cognizance of the fact. Yet as surely as the net is in the waters, the fishermen will come to draw it up; and as surely as the Church is at her work in the world, there will come a day of bringing the results to light, of sorting those who have ever been within the sweep of her net. As in the Parable of the Tares, the sorting belongs to the Son of Man, but He works in it by His angels: the Divine Man, that is, Who is the Head of the race, is the Supreme Judge of human life and character, but His judgement is mediated by unseen forces which are at His command

and which *the day will reveal*.[1] In both parables, again, the judgement is between evil men and good, the test being worthlessness or worth, uselessness or usefulness. The tares are worthless, mere cumberers of the ground; the fish that are thrown away are not good for human food, bad sorts, or bad specimens of a good sort. Is it *meet for the Master's use*? is the servant *trustworthy* or *useless*?[2] is the one question which as it seems will be asked in regard to each life, after it has passed out of the enclosure of the Church, and been beached on the eternal shore.

The clear and final result of an individual life will not, we may be sure, be judged merely by its output of work, its charities, its labours, its achievements, or even its fastings, prayers, and sacramental acts, but also and chiefly by the fitness which it has gained for the work of eternity. Least of all will the mere fact of having been enclosed in the net, of having lived and died in the full membership of the Church avail; rather it is just this fact which makes judgement certain; it is the fish that are in the net that are sorted, and not those that are in the sea; and *Judgement*, as St. Peter says, *must begin at the house of God*.[3] For it is the judgement of the Church that

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. iii. 13.

[2] 2 Tim. ii. 21: εὔχρηστος τῷ δεσπότῃ; Mt. xxv. 21, 30: πιστός . . . ἀχρεῖος.

[3] 1 Peter iv. 17.

we witness in this parable; of Christian nations, not of heathen; of the baptized, not of the world.

The Parable of the Draw-net, you will have observed, is a fellow-parable to that of the Tares: the general idea which runs through them is the same, just as the Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl have a common conception and teaching. But a closer inspection shews points of difference in the two. It is not only the imagery which is different, but the standpoint and the general purpose. In the Parable of the Tares the main thought is of the manifold presence of evil within the Church and all the scandal and perplexity which this fact entails. If the final separation comes into sight, it is only as supplying an answer to the questions raised by the sight of the tares all over the field. But in the Parable of the Draw-net attention is directed not to the present, but to the future. While the net is in the sea, it cannot be seen whether the fish within are good or bad; the whole result is of the nature of a lottery till the time comes for drawing the net in. Even then the distinction between good and bad is not obvious to the bystander; it can only be determined by expert judges, who see in a moment what is good and what is worthless. So the judgement which the Parable of the Draw-net represents is of a very much more subtle and far-reaching kind than that of the Tares and Wheat. It turns, as we have seen, upon

character rather than upon overt acts ; on the general result of life, rather than on its details. And it goes very much further. In the Parable of the Tares there are but two kinds of grain, the wheat and the darnel, and there is no testing of either ; the tares are all condemned, the wheat all saved. In the Parable of the Net there are fish of every sort enclosed, and all are separately scrutinized and accepted or rejected according to their fitness or unfitness for use. And there is a most important amplification upon the former parable. For it is a very crude and imperfect classification which divides a congregation, as some preachers used to do, into ' converted ' and ' unconverted,' saints and sinners, and leaves out of sight the many gradations of character by which the one class shades off into the other. Doubtless in the end there will be found to be but two great classes of men, the good (*καλά*) and the bad, the inedible (*σαπρά*), of the Church's net ; but for the present they are of every kind (*ἐκ παντὸς γένους*), and no one sort is hopelessly bad or finally good. Every soul has its own conditions of life known only to God, and for all varieties of temperament, character, intellect, spiritual constitution, there is a place not only here in the net of the Church, but in the vessels (*ἀγγεῖα*) of the saved.

So the Parable of the Net points us on, even more distinctly than the parable of the Tares, to the great

End of the Age. It bids us *Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come*;[1] it assures us that the judgement will then be based on perfect knowledge of all the facts, on the result of life considered as a preparation for the higher service of the Master and of humanity in a more spiritual sphere of being.

Survey of the Galilean Parables of the Kingdom.

It is time, now that we have reached the end of St. Matthew's heptad of parables of the Kingdom (an octad, if we add St. Mark's, the Seed growing secretly), to see how far they have carried us towards an understanding of what our Lord intended by that great word. For whether these parables were all spoken on one occasion or not, one cannot fail to perceive that there is a real sequence in St. Matthew's order, and that the series does seem to map out the history of the Kingdom from first to last. First, you observe, there are five parables which represent the beginnings and extension of the Kingdom by the analogy of the process of vegetable growth. Then follow two parables, obviously a pair, taken from the ordinary callings of men, which have to do with the entrance of the individual life within range of the action of the forces of the Kingdom. And lastly, there is a striking scene from the fishing

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 5.

industry of the lake-side where our Lord preached, which serves to turn attention to the certain end of all the progress which the Kingdom is to make in the world, the revelation of results, and their issue in the more perfect order of another age.

Let us look more closely at these several stages in their history. First there is the incipient act on the part of the Great Sower, whether He sows broadcast (as in the Parables of the Sower, the Seed growing secretly, and the Tares), or drops a single seed into the ground (as in that of the Mustard Seed). There is no life without seed, and no seed without a sower; and so all spiritual movements in the world, among the nations or in the individual, are traced to the act of God working through His Son and by the Holy Spirit in the sowing of the word. That is the genesis of the Kingdom. The seed carries its own inherent life and capacity for growth, but these require the automatic action of the ground to call them forth, and according as the ground is, so will be the growth and produce. So there comes into view the human factor in the progress of the Kingdom: God works upon man, and man co-operates with God, and the growth proceeds, silently at first and unseen, but afterwards revealed in the processes of a new life, according to the measure of the Divine gift and of man's response to it. But the wheat fields of Galilee shewed not only the young wheat in various stages of growth,

but the intrusion of a foreign and mischievous plant growing with the wheat; and the world-field, when it has been claimed by the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Church and the world have become more or less identified in extent, will shew, the Lord foresees, a similar anomaly. Whence the darnel in the wheat? Whence the evil in the Church? Not from God, but from His enemy; not to be rooted out by man, but to be left for the judgement of God.

Meanwhile no enemy can stop the progress of the Kingdom. Its beginnings are the tiny grains from which will come the tree under whose shadow kings and peoples are to find shelter. Its unseen influence in the world had already entered on a course which must continue until its victory was complete—the teaching of the Parable of the Leaven. It would grow visibly, and still more invisibly, expanding within itself, and gradually dominating and assimilating its surroundings.

Then from this picture of final victory, the Lord turns for a moment to that entrance into individual lives by which after all the most real triumphs of the Kingdom are secured. Again there is a pair of parables to illustrate the point, for one will not suffice to set it forth. The Labourer who finds without seeking, as if by mere accident, and the Merchant who finds in the course of his seeking, represent two widely different types of Christian life, for both of which

there is room; and the Treasure of the buried coin and the goodly and priceless Pearl, shew the one object of Christian enthusiasm in two widely different aspects, corresponding to those different types of men. But both types have this in common—that whether it be treasure or pearl, the Kingdom is the one thing which, having once seen, they will not let go, though it cost them their all to keep it. Both parables lay emphasis on the sacrifices required from those who seek the Kingdom of God, and on the more than equivalent return to be received when they have made it their own.

And now there remains only the end to be depicted. It is seen in the Net drawn to shore, the good collected, the bad thrown away, or rather cast out (ἔξω ἔβαλον). That simple scene, to my mind, tells us more than the apocalyptic language repeated from the interpretation of the Tares. If there should be those, and undoubtedly there will be only too many, who can have no part in the glory of the next age, it is because they are unfitted by their past history to participate in it. They never had any real sympathy with the Kingdom of Heaven, with the Divine Reign under which they nominally came as members of the Church. They were in the Church, but not of it; and when the end of the present order comes, they are cast out, because it has been made manifest that they are not fitted for the work to which the Church is called.

Of this more remote future, or for what ends those who are cast out may be reserved in the mercy of God, we know nothing: it lies beyond the scope of the parable, because it lies beyond the province of the Kingdom of God as it is now revealed.

So the long history ends, or rather, so the Eternal Kingdom begins; for all this has been only preparatory. This note of incompleteness, of preparation, is to be heard throughout the whole series; in the Sower, in the Seed growing secretly, in the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, even in the Treasure and the Pearl; until in the last Parable of the Draw-net, we stand beside the angel sorters on the eternal shore, and see the separation and the end.

II

THE JUDAEAN PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM: PARABLES OF SOCIAL LIFE AND OF CONDUCT IN THE KINGDOM

We come now to quite another type of parables. The scenes are taken not from the outdoor life of Nature, or the road-side or lake-side or the cottage home, but from the social life of the time, the relations of the upper classes to the lower, the master to his slaves, the owner to his labourers, the host to his guests. The tales are longer, and more elaborate, belonging probably to a later period in the ministry and to different surroundings. Jesus is no longer addressing great mixed crowds of peasants and fishermen by the shore of the Lake. His Galilean ministry, or its earlier stage, is over, and His audience consists of the Apostles and other members of His inner group of disciples, or His fellow-guests at the tables of the rich, or the scribes and priests of Jerusalem. He adapts Himself to the changed circumstances with that ease which makes Him master of any company in which He is found. More-

over, He has now other aspects of the Kingdom to portray. It is not the history of the beginning and growth of the Kingdom that we are now to see represented, so much as its relation to the Jewish people, its spirit, its ethical character, its requirements, its issues. This advance in the teaching is very significant; we shall feel as we go forward that we are approaching the completion of this great series of instructions, and of the Lord's earthly ministry.

1. THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER

I BEGIN with what appears to be the oldest of this group of parables, that of the Great Supper, in St. Luke xiv. 16 ff.

The Lord was dining in the house of a leading Pharisee on the Sabbath, and had spoken of the resurrection of the just, when some guest who wished to improve the occasion exclaimed, *Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* The idea came from Isaiah xxv. 6, *In this mountain shall the* LORD *of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.* Doubtless this passage was commonly interpreted in a grossly material way, of a banquet, *e.g.*, on the flesh of Leviathan,[1] and this may have been in the mind of

[1] T. B. Baba Bathra 74 ab; cf. Ps. lxxiv. 14.

the guest. Our Lord corrects his conception of God's great feast, and uses it as a basis for a parable of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Ἄνθρωπός τις ἐποίει δεῖπνον μέγα, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν πολλούς, καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν δοῦλον αὐτοῦ τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ δείπνου εἰπεῖν τοῖς κεκλημένοις Ἔρχεσθε ὅτι ἤδη ἕτοιμά ἐστιν. καὶ ἤρξαντο ἀπὸ μιᾶς πάντες παραιτεῖσθαι. ὁ πρῶτος εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἀγρὸν ἠγόρασα καὶ ἔχω ἀνάγκην ἐξελθὼν ἰδεῖν αὐτόν· ἐρωτῶ σε, ἔχε με παρῃτημένον. καὶ ἕτερος εἶπεν Ζεύγη βοῶν ἠγόρασα πέντε καὶ πορεύομαι δοκιμάσαι αὐτά· ἐρωτῶ σε, ἔχε με παρῃτημένον. καὶ ἕτερος εἶπεν Γυναῖκα ἔγημα καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ δύναμαι ἐλθεῖν. καὶ παραγενόμενος ὁ δοῦλος ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα. τότε ὀργισθεὶς ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης εἶπεν τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἔξελθε ταχέως εἰς τὰς πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας τῆς πόλεως, καὶ τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ἀναπείρους καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ χωλοὺς εἰσάγαγε ὧδε. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ δοῦλος Κύριε, γέγονεν ὃ ἐπέταξας, καὶ ἔτι τόπος ἐστίν. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ κύριος πρὸς τὸν

A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many: and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou didst command is

δοῦλον Ἐξελθε εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ φραγμοὺς καὶ ἀνάγκασον εἰσελθεῖν, ἵνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος· λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων τῶν κεκλημένων γεύσεταί μου τοῦ δείπνου.

done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

St. Luke xiv. 16-24.

The parable turns on the issue of a great number of invitations to the Kingdom of God, which precedes the actual enjoyment of it. *He who sits down at the table of God will be a happy man*, it had just been remarked; and the Lord replies, 'Yet many who have been invited are refusing to come.' The invitations had been issued by every prophet who had spoken of the Messianic kingdom and its feast of good things. The whole Jewish people were bidden by the call of Messianic prophecy. And since the days of the prophets of the Old Testament another call had come, and one which permitted no delay. John the Baptist had preached *Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*[1] A little later Jesus, the Son in the form of a slave, had taken up the call, and made it more imperative: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel;*[2] and the Apostles spread abroad

[1] Mt. iii. 1. [2] Mc. i. 15.

the message. So God had *sent forth his slave at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come ; for all things are now ready.* But those who were called shewed no readiness to come, now that the hour had struck. The Pharisees had stood almost wholly aloof from the Messianic movement. There were all the signs of a Divine call ; they could not deny them. There were miracles, there was prophetic power, there was teaching with authority such as had not been heard in Israel. Everything pointed to a new call from God, but the leaders of the nation hung back. The parable represents the polite refusal by excuses which people would make in common life : a recent purchase of cattle or land, or the duty of attending to the newly-married wife. The excuses which the Scribes had to give for refusing the call of Jesus were appropriate to themselves, want of official verification, Galilean origin, and so forth ; but excuses, nevertheless, which their conscience could not have really allowed, and which were not allowed by God.

The defection of the heads of the nation opened the way for an appeal to the masses. In the command *Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city* we hear the commission under which our Lord's Galilean ministry was carried out. *Quickly*—for the ministry was brief indeed, whether we allow three years or one. *Into the streets and lanes of the city*, that is, amongst the crowds that thronged the

thickly populated towns of Galilee and the south: to the 'man in the street,' as we say, yes, and to the man in the by-ways of the slums, but still the men of Israel, for as yet the embargo against Gentile peoples had not been taken off. But the parable looks forward to the extension of the call beyond the City of God. Presently the servant returns to his Master and reports, *Yet there is room.* That stage was reached when it was revealed to the Church that God had granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life,[1] and then came the first commission, *Go out into the roads and hedgerows*:—into the great roads which crossed Galilee carrying men east and west into the still more marvellous lines of communication which Rome had opened up across Asia Minor, Macedonia, Italy, wherever her proconsuls went, or her armies penetrated; and into the *hedgerows*, the φραγμοί, fences, loose stone walls more probably, which guided the traveller when he left the highroad and sought the remote villages and country towns. The words describe also with wonderful exactness the course of the Early Church in her progress through the heathen world. First, the great towns that lay upon the main roads were evangelized; later, the Gospel penetrated to the interior, and farms and hamlets sent their contribution of guests to the Great Supper of God. So the House of God was filled by willing

[1] Acts xi. 18.

guests who took the places left empty by those originally bidden. The Gentile world is regarded as profiting by the self-exclusion of the Jews, as in St. Paul's allegory of the grafted olive tree; but the parable does not, like St. Paul, hold out the re-instatement of the Jews. For these men to whom our Lord was speaking there probably was no recovery of what they had lost; they could not hope now to taste of the blessings of the Kingdom they had spurned.

This I believe to have been the immediate purpose of this parable. It was spoken in the company of men who under the mask of friendship were bitter enemies of our Lord and of the Kingdom; it was a direct reply to the smug piety of the Pharisaic scribes, who placed the Kingdom in future delights, and refused their present duty. They could say with an unctuous sigh, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, and all the while reject the call to come at once. Such persons are not uncommon in all ages of the world—men whose religion consists in the expectation of a future heaven while they neglect present duty. Those, Christ says, are the men who can never know what 'heaven' really means; for they have no capacity for tasting God's Supper.

But the parable of the Great Supper is not a mere answer to enemies of the Kingdom, Jewish or

Christian. It is full of teaching as to the nature of the Kingdom and its history.

The Kingdom—the Reign of God—then, is a feast of good things spread by the Great Master of the House for His invited guests. God is the giver of the call—*ὁ κεκληκώς*; men are those who are bidden, who are called—*οἱ κεκλημένοι, οἱ κλητοί*. This conception of God as calling men, and of men as called by God, is one of the most persistent, as it is one of the earliest in Scripture. Even in Paradise immediately after the Fall *they heard the voice of the* LORD *God . . . and the* LORD *God called unto the man.*[1] We speak of the 'call' of Abram; the call of Samuel, *Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that the* LORD *had called the child;*[2] the call of the Hebrew nation: *when Israel was a child . . . I called my son out of Egypt.*[3] The voice takes an audible sound in the words of God's servants; it spoke above all in the words of His Son our Lord: *God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.*[4] His voice in Christ is a Gospel, a call to good things: forgiveness, sonship, grace, life; and it is a call to good things which are here and now: *when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son.*[5] And the Christian missionary, who from St. Paul's day to our own carries the Gospel to the hedgerows of the

[1] Gen. iii. 8 f. [2] 1 Sam. iii 8. [3] Hos. xi. 1. [4] Heb. i. 1 f. [5] Gal. iv. 4.

world, is the voice of God, calling men to fill the vacant places in His house and at His table, bringing to men the invitation which is still good, *Come, for all things are now ready.*

Meanwhile the Supper has already begun. The parable warns against the doctrine that the Kingdom of Heaven is concerned with the future life only. Those who obey the calling sit down at once to the feast. The blessedness of him who eats bread in the Kingdom of God is not deferred till the end of the age; it comes in the peace of God, and in fellowship with Him through Christ in the Spirit. The central rite of Christian worship is a sacred meal, witnessing to the fact that the baptized are called already to *keep the feast*, as St. Paul says, of the new and risen life. *Christ, our Passover Lamb, hath been sacrificed for us; let us therefore keep the feast*—ὥστε ἑορτάζωμεν.[1]

On the other hand, the attitude of the Jewish leaders and the nation as a whole towards the Kingdom finds its counterpart in every parish in Christendom to-day. *I pray thee have me excused*—Ἐρωτῶ σε, ἔχε με παρῃτημένον, is heard on all sides. Our churches stand half empty, our altars draw but a fraction of the adult population. Our clergy are eating their hearts out with grief at the apathy of the upper classes, the open refusal of the artisans. Again the call seems to come to us to go out into the

[1] 1 Cor. v. 8.

streets and lanes of our own social life and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame, the outcasts of society : or to go out into the highways and hedges of the heathen world, and constrain men to come into the Church. Both these forms of Christian work are remarkably characteristic of our own age : 'slum-work' as we call it, such as is being done by College missions and the Church Army in our midst ; foreign mission-work, which is in this very year about to be made the special study of the whole Anglican communion.[1] What our educated men and women and our industrial classes are asking to be excused from accepting, our very poor and the heathen are stretching out their hands after, and God has put it into the hearts of his servants to give it to them.

So the inexhaustible words of Christ, spoken to the men of His own time, fulfil themselves to-day. The Kingdom of Heaven runs its course on the lines marked out at the beginning. The call comes to all in their turn ; when men refuse it, it passes them by and goes on to another class or another race, until at last God's house is filled. There can be no failure in the end to fill the places, though those who were first called may count themselves unworthy of the great feast, or prefer to it their paltry gain or pursuits.

[1] In the summer following the term in which these lectures were given, the Lambeth Conference and the Pan-Anglican Congress were held.

2. THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF THE KING'S SON

I TAKE next a parable which is closely related to that of the Great Supper, viz. the Marriage of the King's Son. It is as follows :

Ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ καλέσαι τοὺς κεκλημένους εἰς τοὺς γάμους, καὶ οὐκ ἤθελον ἐλθεῖν. πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους λέγων Εἴπατε τοῖς κεκλημένοις Ἰδοὺ τὸ ἄριστόν μου ἡτοίμακα, οἱ ταῦροί μου καὶ τὰ σιτιστὰ τεθυμένα, καὶ πάντα ἕτοιμα· δεῦτε εἰς τοὺς γάμους. οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες ἀπῆλθον, ὃς μὲν εἰς τὸν ἴδιον ἀγρόν, ὃς δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμπορίαν αὐτοῦ· οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ κρατήσαντες τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ὕβρισαν καὶ ἀπέκτειναν. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ὠργίσθη, καὶ πέμψας τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτοῦ ἀπώλεσεν τοὺς φονεῖς ἐκείνους καὶ τὴν πόλιν αὐτῶν ἐνέπρησεν. τότε λέγει τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ Ὁ μὲν γάμος ἕτοιμός ἐστιν,

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast : and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner : my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready : come to the marriage feast. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise : and the rest laid hold on his servants, and entreated them shamefully, and killed them. But the king was wroth ; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their

οἱ δὲ κεκλημένοι οὐκ ἦσαν ἄξιοι· πορεύεσθε οὖν ἐπὶ τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν, καὶ ὅσους ἐὰν εὕρητε καλέσατε εἰς τοὺς γάμους. καὶ ἐξελθόντες οἱ δοῦλοι ἐκεῖνοι εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς συνήγαγον πάντας οὓς εὗρον, πονηρούς τε καὶ ἀγαθούς· καὶ ἐπλήσθη ὁ νυμφὼν ἀνακειμένων. εἰσελθὼν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς θεάσασθαι τοὺς ἀνακειμένους εἶδεν ἐκεῖ ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου· καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ Ἑταῖρε, πῶς εἰσῆλθες ὧδε μὴ ἔχων ἔνδυμα γάμου; ὁ δὲ ἐφιμώθη. τότε ὁ βασιλεὺς εἶπεν τοῖς διακόνοις Δήσαντες αὐτοῦ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ἐκβάλετε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. πολλοὶ γάρ εἰσιν κλητοὶ ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί.

city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast. And those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was filled with guests. But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.

St. Matthew xxii. 2-14.

You will observe at once certain broad points of likeness between this parable and that of the Great Supper. Both describe a banquet, and an invitation

to it, which is repeated at supper time. Both speak of a deliberate rejection of the invitation by those who received it. Both again relate the second mission of the servants to the highways. So much then the two stories have in common, but the rest is different. It is a small matter that the meal is a late one (δεῖπνον) in one tale and an early (ἄριστον) in the other; that may be merely a difference in the translation of the original Aramaic word used by our Lord. But it is significant that in the second parable the meal is a festivity in honour of the marriage of the King's son. This imports into the second parable a whole train of ideas connected with the Divine Nuptials which is wholly absent from the first parable, and points quite clearly to our Lord Himself as the Son of God and the Bridegroom of the future Church. Again, since the affront is now done to a King, the consequences are represented as more serious; the guests who turn their backs on the royal marriage are not simply excluded, but when they proceed to abuse and kill the King's messengers they are destroyed, and their city is burnt; herein we may detect quite clearly a forecast of the doom of Jerusalem. And towards the end of the parable, an entirely new scene is added which effectually distinguishes St. Matthew's parable from St. Luke's. In the Great Supper all who accept the invitation and take their places

at the table appear to be approved; it is only those who turn away that are rejected. But in the Marriage Feast of the King's Son even those who accept and obey the call are subjected to a scrutiny; the King not only destroys the murderers who killed his slaves, but comes in to inspect the guests, and rejects one who is not suitably arrayed. And the clue to the interpretation with which the parable ends is not, *Many are called, but few obey the call*; but, *Many are called, but few chosen* — πολλοὶ . . . κλητοὶ ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί, words which lay emphasis on the possible rejection of many, even of most of those who are called, and of some even at the last.

To understand these differences between the two parables we must attend to the different circumstances in which they were spoken. The Great Supper was addressed to a company at a Pharisee's house, which was outwardly and ostensibly friendly to our Lord, and the attitude attributed in it to the leaders of the Jewish nation is one of polite refusal only. Up to this time their hostility to the Kingdom had hardly gone further. But the Marriage Feast of the King's Son was spoken in the Temple precincts on the Tuesday in Holy Week to the members of the Sanhedrin who were already set on our Lord's arrest and death: murder was in their hearts, the murder of Christ, and in the future of His followers; it was no longer a matter of simply turning away from their

own salvation. And so the parable speaks in the plainest terms of murderers and their doom and their city's doom: the Roman armies would come and set fire to that very part of the Temple buildings in which the parable was uttered.

And it may be that the occasion accounts also for the episode of the King coming in to see the guests. For the end of the Ministry and earthly life is now so near that the Lord cannot but look forward beyond the near future to His coming again. In the Great Supper He foresees the call to the Gentiles, and what St. Paul calls, the *obedience*[1] of the Gentiles, *i.e.* their general response to the call. In the Marriage Feast of the King's Son, He looks further, to the day of the Parousia, when the King in the person of the returning Christ, will pass under review all who have been called, and will distinguish between guest and guest, choosing only such as have qualified themselves for the King's presence.

The qualification is the wearing of an ἔνδυμα γάμου, a wedding-garment, such as befits the occasion. There is a somewhat similar parable to be found in the Talmud,[2] in which the servants of a King having been suddenly summoned to a royal banquet, some of them came without changing their work-a-day clothes, and were condemned to stand and watch the rest enjoy their supper. There seems to be no

[1] Rom. xv. 18. [2] Shabbath 153 a.

evidence that there was any particular dress known as a wedding-robe (ἔνδυμα γάμου), or that such a dress was provided for every guest, and put on at the door, as the commentators have supposed. It seems as though all that is meant is that the guest whom the King in our parable rejects had not taken the trouble to prepare himself for the King's presence, had not perhaps expected that he would meet the King's eye, had hoped to pass muster among the rest. Hence his confusion when detected; he had not a word to say for himself. And the sentence is exactly just; he has not been at the trouble to make himself ready, and therefore cannot be permitted to remain in the company of those who have.

The Kingdom of Heaven, then, demands on the part of all who are God's guests self-preparation. Whatever makes the soul ready for the presence of God and for fellowship with Him, is the wedding garment required, and it is the provision of this which converts the call (κλῆσις) into the choice (ἐκλογή), and makes the called (κλητός) a chosen one (ἐκλεκτός). Later books of the New Testament explain what this preparation is: it is the putting on of Christ, sacramentally in Baptism,[1] actually by the daily life of practical godliness,[2] through which the soul gradually acquires the character of Christ or of renewed humanity;[3] as in the words of the

[1] Gal. iii. 27. [2] Rom. xiii. 14. [3] Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10, 12.

Apocalypse, the *fine linen* in which the Bride is arrayed and the guests too (for the guests are only the Bride under another aspect) is the *righteous acts of the saints* (*τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων*), that *sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord.*[1] The want of this preparation involves exclusion from the higher life of the Kingdom. It does so even here, but men can live on here without God and be unconscious of their loss; whereas in the world to come this greatest of all losses is realized, and that darkness of soul sets in, which the parable likens to the blackness of a night made visible by the lights of the great banqueting hall from which the unprepared guest has been cast out. There, in the realized sense of the loss of God, is all that answers in the inner life of men to the bitter weeping and fruitless self-pity of the world —the weeping and gnashing of teeth.[2]

Now let us take the two parables together, and see what we learn from them in combination as to our Lord's teaching about *the Kingdom of Heaven* or *of God.*

We see in them the Divine Kingdom represented as the preparing on God's part of a great feast of

[1] Apoc. xix. 8; Heb. xii. 14.

[2] *ὁ κλαυθμός, ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων*, a phrase which Mt. has already in viii. 12; xiii. 42, 50, and which may have been added to these parables by those through whom they were handed down, or by the editor of the Gospels.

good things for mankind, and the sending forth of a succession of messengers to invite men to it. The first messengers are sent to a chosen few, a limited number of guests, who however, when the time comes, first excuse themselves, and end by making away with the messengers. They receive the due reward of these deeds. Then the invitation is gradually widened: first, to the lowest of the people in the city, then to the passers-by on high road or field path in the open country; these come in, filling the empty hall. Lastly, when all the guests are assembled, the King Himself inspects the company, and singles out a man who has entered in his working dress, who is forthwith sent out into the night, and the banquet proceeds.

In the earlier invitation of selected guests it is impossible not to see, and those to whom the parable was spoken doubtless saw, the call of the chosen people of Israel; and in the latest, to which there was no limit, we can now easily detect the call of the Gentile world. The King's scrutiny indicates that acceptance of the call is not the only part which men have to fulfil in the service of the Divine Kingdom. Faith, if it has not works, is dead; men's lives must answer to their creed. The Divine call in the Gospel demands on the part of those to whom it comes not merely a passive acceptance or obedience, but a life-long personal effort, through the Holy Spirit,

to prepare for the right use of God's gifts. To forgo this effort is to forfeit the gift to which we were called. There is something beyond a *high calling*[1] which is needful to eternal life, namely God's final choice, and His choice falls on those who have made both calling and election sure.[2] Read together, the parables contain a double warning: to the Pharisees of our Lord's time, a warning not to refuse the voice that called them to the feast of God; to us, Gentiles, who have been called in their place, a warning not to forget the scrutiny which will precede the final selection of the guests.

[1] Phil. iii. 14.

[2] 2 Pet. i. 10. σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλῆσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι.

3. THE PARABLE OF THE FORGIVEN BUT UNFORGIVING DEBTOR

We now go back to pick up an earlier parable in St. Matthew, which was passed over in order to bring together the two kindred parables of St. Luke xiv. and St. Matthew xxii. We return to the parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

Διὰ τοῦτο ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ ὃς ἠθέλησεν συνᾶραι λόγον μετὰ τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ· ἀρξαμένου δὲ αὐτοῦ συναίρειν προσήχθη εἷς αὐτῷ ὀφειλέτης μυρίων ταλάντων. μὴ ἔχοντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀποδοῦναι ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος πραθῆναι καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ πάντα ὅσα ἔχει, καὶ ἀποδοθῆναι. πεσὼν οὖν ὁ δοῦλος προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγων Μακροθύμησον ἐπ' ἐμοί, καὶ πάντα ἀποδώσω σοι. σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ δούλου ἐκείνου ἀπέλυσεν αὐτόν, καὶ τὸ δάνιον ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ. ἐξελθὼν δὲ ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος εὗρεν ἕνα τῶν συνδούλων αὐτοῦ ὃς ὤφειλεν αὐτῷ ἑκατὸν δηνάρια, καὶ κρατήσας αὐτὸν ἔπνιγεν λέγων Ἀπόδος εἴ τι ὀφείλεις.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-

πεσὼν οὖν ὁ σύνδουλος αὐτοῦ παρεκάλει αὐτὸν λέγων Μακροθύμησον ἐπ' ἐμοί, καὶ ἀποδώσω σοι. ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἤθελεν, ἀλλὰ ἀπελθὼν ἔβαλεν αὐτὸν εἰς φυλακὴν ἕως ἀποδῷ τὸ ὀφειλόμενον. ἰδόντες οὖν οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτοῦ τὰ γενόμενα ἐλυπήθησαν σφόδρα, καὶ ἐλθόντες διεσάφησαν τῷ κυρίῳ ἑαυτῶν πάντα τὰ γενόμενα. τότε προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ λέγει αὐτῷ Δοῦλε πονηρέ, πᾶσαν τὴν ὀφειλὴν ἐκείνην ἀφῆκά σοι, ἐπεὶ παρεκάλεσάς με· οὐκ ἔδει καὶ σὲ ἐλεῆσαι τὸν σύνδουλόν σου, ὡς κἀγὼ σὲ ἠλέησα; καὶ ὀργισθεὶς ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν τοῖς βασανισταῖς ἕως οὗ ἀποδῷ πᾶν τὸ ὀφειλόμενον. Οὕτως καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος ποιήσει ὑμῖν ἐὰν μὴ ἀφῆτε ἕκαστος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν καρδιῶν ὑμῶν.

servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

St. Matthew xviii. 23-35.

The connexion of this parable with the preceding context is interesting. The Lord was with His disciples, who had come to ask the question *Who is greater* (than the rest) *in the kingdom of heaven*? *i.e.* what social gradations will there be in the new order? St. Mark puts it differently: the disciples had been by the way discussing this question, and Jesus anticipates what they wished, but were perhaps ashamed, to ask. In either case He was led to speak to them of social relations in the Divine Kingdom; and then proceeded to dwell upon the need of reverence for the scruples and weaknesses of their brother disciples and of the right way of dealing with a brother who offends: 'Tell him his fault privately, and if he confesses it, forgive him.' Something was added about the privileges of the ἐκκλησία, the Christian congregation. But Peter's thoughts were still occupied with the treatment of the offending brother; was it to be repeated *ad infinitum*, or what limit was there to be to such reconciliation?

Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. The precise phrase comes from Gen. iv. 24, *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold;*[1] *i.e.* if the man who slays Cain is pro-

[1] LXX: ἑπτάκις ἐκδεδίκηται ἐκ Κάιν, ἐκ δὲ Λάμεχ ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτά.

tected by the fear of the sevenfold vengeance, the threat of a seventy-times-seven vengeance protects Lamech. Jesus, contrasting the spirit of the Old Testament, teaches that the disciple of the Kingdom is to exercise a seventy-times-sevenfold forgiveness. While Peter is still aghast at this practically unlimited call upon his charity, the Lord justifies it by this immortal parable. *Therefore*—since unlimited forgiveness of wrongs is one of the laws which the Kingdom of Heaven imposes on all its subjects—*Therefore the kingdom of heaven is likened* to the scene that follows.

And what is the picture? We see an oriental King, possessing despotic power, whose ministers and courtiers are his slaves, since he has absolute control over their persons and property. These slaves of the great King are manifestly high officials, ministers of state entrusted with huge sums of money. The King is his own Chancellor of the Exchequer, and possesses the right to call to account every official who serves under him. One day it becomes known that it is the King's will to examine the books, to cast up the accounts (*συνᾶραι λόγον*) and balance them. He had but begun his work (*ἀρξαμένου δὲ αὐτοῦ συναίρειν*), when an official was conducted to the royal presence against whom was proved an enormous debt—10,000 talents. Reckoning the talent as worth £240, this gives £2,400,000; and this minister must

have embezzled the taxes of the whole country. When detected he had resort to the abject self-abasement of the Oriental, and lay grovelling at the feet of the monarch (*προσεκύνει αὐτῷ*), asking only for time—'*Bear with me* (*μακροθύμησον*) long enough, and every penny shall be repaid.' It was impossible and absurd, but the King was touched by the spectacle of this great vizier's utter humiliation, and granted him not forbearance (*μακροθυμία*), but forgiveness (*ἄφεσις*), not time to make good the deficit, but absolute release from the debt, wiping off millions at a word.

So ends the first act of the drama. We are left to imagine the proper expressions of gratitude on the part of the minister, as he went out of the royal presence. In the second act the same person finds himself the creditor and a subordinate his debtor. The debt is only 100 denarii; taking the denarius at 9½d., it amounts to £3 19s. 2d., an infinitesimal part of what he had owed the King. The plea urged by this creditor is exactly what he himself had urged—he can pay if time is allowed him; and in this case with good reason, for 100 denarii could be made even by the mere labourer in four months. You expect the King's servant, remembering what had occurred to himself, to forgive the debt at once; but he would not even hear of delay. The debtor was seized by the throat and carried off to prison, where he might

have lain for the rest of his life, but for the intervention of the other ministers of the King. The King, informed of the facts, recalled his act of mercy to the unmerciful creditor, and treated him as he had treated his own debtor. Nay, a far worse fate befalls him: he is handed over in prison to *the tormentors* (*βασανισταί*), not the jailer only, but the officials whose business it was in Eastern prisons to elicit the truth by the rack and other instruments of torture. There the curtain falls upon him, and he is left without hope of release till the gigantic debt is paid. He had asked for time to pay it, and he shall have time, but it will avail him nothing; it will but prolong his misery.

And now for the resemblance between the conduct of the King in this typically Eastern story, and the dealings of God with men in the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the root of the parable there lies the thought that human life with all its powers and responsibilities is held by each of us for God and under God, and that God may be expected to call men to account for that which has been committed to them. It is not, however, the final reckoning of the Day of God that is in view here, but a reckoning *in foro conscientiae*, when under the strain of illness or loss, or in fear of death the individual is 'brought' to stand face to

face with His Maker, and to see how he has spent upon himself or frittered away the years that were God's, so that he can give no good account of the revenues committed to him. The enormous debt named in the parable is not really excessive for the purpose of the similitude, for it emphasizes the impossibility of making good by any effort on our part the debt which is due to God. Sin, viewed as a wasting of powers which partake of the nature of the infinite, an embezzlement to our own use of that which belongs to God and should have been laid out in His service, implies a debt which is all but infinite. Sinners, brought face to face with this view of life, ask only for time ; the first feeling is ' Let me recover from this illness, and I will pay Thee all.' But that is not the principle on which God works, and for the reason that He knows that no man can pay the debt of his sins. The Kingdom of Heaven brings a full and free pardon of the past : a forgiveness of sins (*ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν*), and not simply an exercise of forbearance (*μακροθυμία*). The forbearance of God is shewn in His waiting for men to repent ;[1] but when they repent it is exchanged for compassion (*σπλαγχνισμός*) and mercy (*ἔλεος*), as we see in the parable. The Lord's Prayer asks *Forgive us our debts, ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν*—not ' Have forbearance with us ' or ' with our debts,' *μακροθύμησον ἐφ' ἡμῖν* or *ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀφειλήμασιν*

[1] Cf. 1 Tim. i. 16 ; 2 Pet. iii. 9.

ἡμῶν. It is not a delay of judgement which the Gospel offers, but a full remission of sins, or, as St. Paul calls it, justification of the sinner. And this remission comes not at the end of the Christian life but at the beginning. It is conveyed sacramentally at the font: 'I believe in one Baptism for the remission of sins.' It is borne in upon the heart by the very first act of our daily morning and evening prayer; the Church by placing the Absolution or Remission of Sins where she does, teaches that the whole service of Christian prayer and praise rests upon the sense of a foregoing forgiveness of sins. These are among the elements of the Gospel, but they are by no means generally understood or believed; men try to work up to forgiveness, instead of working from it, or they hope to make amends for their sins instead of starting upon a new course with the assurance that the past has been blotted out by the infinite mercy of God. But, as the parable testifies, such is not the method of the Divine Kingdom on earth. God forgives us all that debt, because we desire it of Him in the Name of His Son. We go from the Presence, where our sin has been penitently confessed, absolved and free.

So far the parable speaks of the Divine forgiveness. Then in terrible contrast with it there is placed the unmercifulness of man. Let it be observed that the action of the unmerciful servant was not formally unjust. In the eye of the law he was justified in

demanding payment and refusing to grant time when he was besought to do so, and also in casting the debtor into prison till the debt was paid. The thing was done every day, and done under the sanction of the law. It might be thought sharp practice, but it did not violate human justice. But our Lord, as is His wont, puts a new construction on human conduct by comparing with it the Divine. 'Look,' He says, 'at your dealings with one another in the light of God's dealings with yourself.' The Gospel preaches a Divine forgiveness of sins. But the doctrine carries with it as a necessary corollary the duty of forgiving one another; as surely as we turn to God day by day we bind ourselves by asking and accepting God's pardon to forgive our debtors, *i.e.* those who have done us, or whom we suppose to have done us, a wrong. Thus even in the Lord's Prayer, which seems to have been given to the disciples quite early in the ministry, this principle had been clearly laid down.[1] Its reasonableness is now placed beyond doubt by the parable before us. What would any of us think of the conduct of a servant who went straight from the presence of a master who had forgiven him an enormous debt, and exacted his dues from a fellow-servant who sought his forbearance? The Christian's daily prayer for forgiveness is a daily guarantee that

[1] Mt. vi. 12 (forgive . . . *as* we also *have forgiven*, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν), 14 f.; Lc. xi. 4 (forgive . . . *for* we ourselves also *forgive*, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν).

he means to forgive; consistency requires this at his hands.

But the parable goes much further. The forgiven servant who in his turn is unforgiving is not only self-condemned, but loses the mercy he has received; the Divine forgiveness in his case is cancelled, and the debt reimposed; indeed, his condition is worse than before, for he is not only thrust into prison till the debt is paid, but *delivered to the tormentors*, whereas the original sentence was no more than that he should be sold for a bond-slave.

But what are we to make of this undoing of a Divine act, this recalling of a Divine absolution? Once forgiven, is not a man always forgiven? Must we not say that the act of the King who cancels his own pardon belongs only to the imagery of the parable, and not to the innermost truth of things? But our Lord's own words which follow the parable seem intended to guard against this view: *So also*—*οὕτως καί*—as this King did, *so also shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.* In fact, these words carry the teaching of the parable many steps further than we might have supposed it to go, for they stipulate that the forgiveness shall be not only formal but *from the heart*, with the full consent of the inmost personality. Thus when men say that they 'forgive but cannot forget,' that is, that

the reconciliation does not go beyond outward acts they do not really exonerate themselves from the charge of belonging to the category of the Unmerciful Servant. God not only forgives, but forgets: *Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more*:[1] so even the Old Testament speaks.

But in what sense can it be held that God's absolutions are revocable? In this, no doubt, that all are at present conditional and not final. A state of forgiveness is a state of renewed fellowship with God through Christ in the Spirit; whatsoever breaks that fellowship brings back the estrangement from God which is the penalty of sin. But men break it with their own hands when they fall from love, when they refuse to forgive from their hearts; the punishment they inflict upon themselves by an unforgiving spirit is greater than any they can inflict upon an offending brother. They lose the power to pray; the Spirit of God gradually withdraws His presence; and the end is spiritual death and the torments of an awakened conscience. The unforgiving, in short, make their own prison and are their own tormentors. Yet in one point the parable fails. It seems to represent the position of the unforgiving as hopeless. It is so, while he remains such; but the Atonement, of which our Lord could not speak freely before the Passion, has opened a door of escape for every

[1] Heb. x. 17; cf. Jer. xxxi. 34.

penitent. If a servant of God is to forgive his fellow-servant *seventy times seven*, God Himself will certainly not refuse forgiveness as often as it is sincerely sought. On the other hand it must not be forgotten that an unforgiving spirit tends to become chronic, and so penitence becomes impossible.

In our complex modern life difficulties often arise with regard to the application of our Lord's rule. For example, it may be asked whether in any circumstances it can be right for a Christian, in view of the teaching of this parable, to prosecute, or to claim legal damages, or in any way to procure the punishment of a person who has committed an offence against himself, or even to recover a debt by process of law? The consensus of the best Christian opinion leaves no doubt on the matter; it allows that there are circumstances in which it is not only permissible, but a duty to prosecute and to punish. Only, in such cases the prosecutor or person who punishes must make it a matter of conscience to ascertain that he is not actuated by a vindictive or an unforgiving spirit. It is the animus of the servant in the parable which is forbidden, not the simple recovery of a debt. In the same way, the parable does not require in private life the resumption of intimate relations with a person who has shewn himself unworthy of them. There may be full *ex animo* forgiveness of a wrong, and no personal sense whatever of soreness or ill-will towards

the offender, and yet common sense and the desire to avoid future occasion of friction may dictate a policy of aloofness for the time to come. As long as the Kingdom of Heaven is among men on earth, such limitations to human fellowship are inevitable, and the effort to ignore them is utopian; but it is always possible for the true subjects of the Kingdom to forgive from their hearts even those with whom they cannot freely associate. God does not ask impossibilities from His servants: the Christian rule is well given by St. Paul: *If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men*: [1] and again, with special reference to fellow-members of the Church: *Forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.*[2]

4. THE PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

We now proceed to the consideration of another Parable of the Kingdom which is of wide interest; it is found in St. Matthew xx.

Πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι. Ὁμοία γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία	*But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last. For the kingdom*

[1] Rom. xii. 18. εἰ δυνατόν, τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν μετὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἰρηνεύοντες.

[2] Eph. iv. 32. χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν.

τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότῃ ὅστις ἐξῆλθεν ἅμα πρωὶ μισθώσασθαι ἐργάτας εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ· συμφωνήσας δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐργατῶν ἐκ δηναρίου τὴν ἡμέραν ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἐξελθὼν περὶ τρίτην ὥραν εἶδεν ἄλλους ἑστῶτας ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ ἀργούς· καὶ ἐκείνοις εἶπεν Ὑπάγετε καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν ᾖ δίκαιον δώσω ὑμῖν· οἱ δὲ ἀπῆλθον. πάλιν δὲ ἐξελθὼν περὶ ἕκτην καὶ ἐνάτην ὥραν ἐποίησεν ὡσαύτως. περὶ δὲ τὴν ἑνδεκάτην ἐξελθὼν εὗρεν ἄλλους ἑστῶτας, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς Τί ὧδε ἑστήκατε ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἀργοί; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ Ὅτι οὐδείς ἡμᾶς ἐμισθώσατο· λέγει αὐτοῖς Ὑπάγετε καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα. ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης λέγει ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος τῷ ἐπιτρόπῳ αὐτοῦ Κάλεσον τοὺς ἐργάτας καὶ ἀπόδος τὸν μισθὸν ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῶν ἐσχάτων ἕως τῶν πρώτων. ἐλθόντες δὲ οἱ περὶ τὴν ἑνδεκάτην ὥραν ἔλαβον ἀνὰ δηνάριον. καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ πρῶτοι ἐνόμισαν ὅτι πλεῖον

of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came

λήμψονται· καὶ ἔλαβον τὸ ἀνὰ δηνάριον καὶ αὐτοί. λαβόντες δὲ ἐγόγγυζον κατὰ τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότου λέγοντες Οὗτοι οἱ ἔσχατοι μίαν ὥραν ἐποίησαν, καὶ ἴσους αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν ἐποίησας τοῖς βαστάσασι τὸ βάρος τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τὸν καύσωνα. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς ἑνὶ αὐτῶν εἶπεν Ἑταῖρε, οὐκ ἀδικῶ σε· οὐχὶ δηναρίου συνεφώνησάς μοι; ἆρον τὸ σὸν καὶ ὕπαγε· θέλω δὲ τούτῳ τῷ ἐσχάτῳ δοῦναι ὡς καὶ σοί· οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὃ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς; ἢ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου πονηρός ἐστιν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀγαθός εἰμι; Οὕτως ἔσονται οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι.

that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last.

St. Matthew xix. 30–xx. 16.

In the Galilean parables corn-growing and fishing are the predominant employments. Those on the other hand which were spoken on the way to Jerusalem

or at Jerusalem, when they speak of vegetation, make the cultivation of the vine and the fig the chief feature ; [1] for the hills of Samaria and Judaea were largely planted with these fruit trees, and husbandry consisted in their growth, the hills of Judaea at least affording little soil suitable for the growth of cereals.

The owner of a vineyard might either work it himself, or let it to a farmer (γεωργός) who paid in kind. The latter case is contemplated in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mt. xxi. 33 ff.), the former here. This owner farms his own land, not of course that he usually works the vineyard with his own hands, but he himself engages the labourers (ἐργαταί) and pays their wages, taking the whole of the proceeds. He finds his labourers in the ἀγορά, *i.e.* the open space in Jewish towns and the larger villages, which partly answered to the Greek *agora*. Here the labourers stood ready to be hired ; and hither the vineyard owner goes in search of them five times in the course of the day, at 6 and 9 a.m., at noon, at 3, and again at 5. With the first batch who came from sunrise to sunset he made the usual terms—one silver denarius for the day. It was the traditional daily wage of Palestine, for its equivalent, the Greek drachma, is paid by Tobit,[2] and as such it is accepted without

[1] Mt. xx. 1 ff. ; xxi. 28-32 ; 33 ff. ; Lc. xiii. 6 ff.

[2] Tobit v. 14 [15]. ἐγώ σοι δίδωμι μισθὸν τὴν ἡμέραν δραχμήν (so cod. ℵ).

reluctance. With the rest no bargain is made; only that they should receive *whatsoever is right*, which would probably be understood to mean the *aliquot* part of a denarius. So the men worked through the day, or their several portions of it, till sunset, and then the overseer—ἐπίτροπος—under whom they worked, summoned them to receive the day's wages. He had been instructed to begin with the last hired, and these to their surprise instead of receiving the twelfth of a denarius received full pay. The same thing happened to those who had spent but a quarter or a half or three-quarters of the day at work. This generosity was resented by the men who had been hired first yet had been paid no more, though they had undergone twelve hours of toil and exposure to the heat. Superficially, their complaint was not without reason, and it was patiently heard by the master; yet he did not take back his decision. For having agreed to work for a denarius, the men could not legally demand more, nor complain if others received more. Yet we cannot be surprised that they felt the master's generosity to the others ill-timed; and the question arises, How can this somewhat arbitrary proceeding on the part of the master of the vineyard be said to resemble the methods of the Kingdom of Heaven—of God's dealing with men in the Christian dispensation?

Now we must notice first of all the purpose of the

parable, as it is shewn in St. Matthew's context. In passing let me warn you against an assumption, which you will find in some recent commentaries. Do not suppose that the editor of the first Gospel has placed those parables which are peculiar to himself and are derived no doubt from the Logia in any context which they seemed to him to suit, so that the context in which they stand now is no real guide to their original purpose and aim. That view appears to me to be purely arbitrary, and I prefer the perfectly natural assumption of the earlier writers that the parable belongs in each case to its context, that is, that the editor found it in a certain sequence or setting, and has preserved that sequence in his narrative.

What then is the connexion in which this parable stands in St. Matthew? Like the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant it arose out of a remark made by St. Peter. Reflecting on the incident of the rich young man who went away sorrowful when he was called to part with his great possessions, St. Peter exclaimed with self-satisfaction, *Lo, we* (ἡμεῖς) *have left all and followed thee*; to which the Lord replied that all that any disciple had left for his sake should be abundantly repaid, adding however, *But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last.* The words were evidently of the nature of a warning, but what they warned St. Peter and the rest against does not appear from

St. Mark's account. St. Matthew, however, found it cleared up in the Logia by this parable, which ends *So the last shall be first, and the first last*: meaning, 'This is the way in which the Kingdom of Heaven will set the last first, and the first last.' It is this principle which the parable must be taken chiefly to illustrate.

Now when we turn to the parable we find the last made first by being treated as equal to the first, and the first made last by becoming as the last in regard to the great reward. St. Peter had asked, *What then shall we have*?[1] there must surely be some superlative reward in the coming Messianic Kingdom for the first disciples who had made the great venture of casting in their lot with Jesus in days when He was not in favour, and had left their homes at Bethsaida, and even their fishing on the lake, or, like Levi, their books and receipts. The Lord replies, 'Yes, but, in the last resort, no other than what every labourer who did the work shall have.' When the day's work is over, and the labourers are called to receive their wage, it will be found to be one and the same for first and last. In eternal life there can be neither less nor more, for it is the Presence and Possession of God.

But can it be that in that day when the great reward is given, there will be found those who murmur against the Owner of the vineyard, because they have received

[1] Mt. xix. 27. τί ἄρα ἔσται ἡμῖν;

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no more than, let us say, the penitent thief, who repented and believed at his last hour? or that if there could be such, they would nevertheless receive their reward? Surely not, for such a spirit would be wholly inconsistent with the fitness for the inheritance of the Saints without which it could not be theirs; those who thus murmured against their brethren and against God would not only receive no more, but would lose all. This part of the parable then cannot find an exact counterpart in the Kingdom of God, but it serves to shew to St. Peter and his generation the latent folly and wrong of the question, *What then shall we have—i.e.* over and above others? For that spirit, if it could remain unchecked to the end, and shew itself in its true colours then, would produce discontent on the very threshold of Heaven; its real tendency is seen in the murmuring, the γογγυσμός, of the first-called labourers, and in the evil eye, the jealousy towards their brother-workers, in whose well-being they ought to have rejoiced. In their conduct St. Peter, if he had eyes to see, could discern his own mean self-seeking in the ripe fruit; with him it was as yet but a germ which might be crushed at once before it gained strength; and he is solemnly warned, and in him his generation is warned, to crush it as soon as it appeared. In fact there can be little doubt that in this parable as well as in the next, to which we shall presently come, the Lord wished to

correct in His disciples an evil tendency which they shared with other Jews of their time. The later Judaism based all its hopes of future blessedness on a doctrine of human merit which was the opposite of the Gospel of the Kingdom. So much merit, the Rabbis held and taught, so much reward; and merit meant the sum of legal performances which a man was able to accomplish in his lifetime. It was this system which our Lord denounced, and St. Paul after Him, and it was this which lay at the heart of St. Peter's question, *What then shall we have?* But whether such a doctrine of merit was propounded by Scribe or Apostle, it was fatal to any right view of the relation of man to God, and to any true interpretation of human life. God rewards human labour, but the reward is of grace and not of debt. The Lord in this parable teaches the Apostles this great lesson.

But besides this lesson for the first generation, the parable has much instruction for the later Church. In the first place, we must not overlook the Old Testament retrospect which is implied when the vineyard is used as the scene of the work of the Kingdom of Heaven. For the vineyard is a commonplace of the prophets of Israel when they wished to represent God's dealings with His ancient people. *The vineyard of the* LORD *of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.* So the first Isaiah;[1]

[1] Is. v. 7.

and again *A vineyard of wine . . . I the* LORD *do keep it . . . Israel shall blossom and bud : and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.*[1] So again Jeremiah : *Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot . . . They have made it a desolation.*[2] That this was indeed so in our Lord's time the account which the Gospels give us of the Pharisaic Scribes makes evident. But in the ministry of Jesus the vineyard of the Lord was beginning to revive ; the Messianic Kingdom was to be a return of the old theocracy under new conditions, an extension of the Lord's portion to the Gentile world. The Israel of God would indeed, under its sway, blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. That is a truth which lies on the surface of the parable.

Then there is a second point which is highly instructive : the method of working the vineyard. We see the owner superintending, the overseer managing, the labourers at work through the long day of twelve hours. Work, personal labour, is seen to be a law of the Divine Kingdom, and the condition on which the rewards of the Kingdom are gained ; the future joys of the Messianic reign are made to depend upon it, so that from this point of view they are represented in the light of wages ; as *the labourer is worthy of his hire*,[3] so is the worker in the Divine

[1] Is. xxvii. 2, 3, 6. [2] Jer. xii. 10 f. [3] Lc. x. 7.

Kingdom, although the hire itself is gratuitous,[1] not wages (ὀψώνια), but a free gift (χάρισμα). The gift of God, that is, in the future life is not bestowed except upon those who have used the short day of the earthly life in His service, or so much of it as was left to them when the Divine call came. And here we catch a glimpse of the complementary truth that no service that we can render deserves the infinite reward; the labourers who were called at the eleventh hour certainly had not deserved full pay, and yet they received it, out of pure bounty on the part of the householder, and at his discretion. In fact, this was so in the case of all the labourers except those who were first called, with whom there was a bargain struck, because the gratuitous character of their wages could not be shewn on the face of the story without destroying its probability; the ordinary labourer does not of course receive a gratuity, but just what his labour is worth.

But does the parable teach that in the life to come there will be perfect equality among the servants of the Kingdom, all enjoying the same blessedness, all possessing the same faculties and powers for future service? Certainly a superficial study of this parable taken by itself might suggest this. But if it did, the impression would be corrected by other parables such as those of the Talents and the Pounds. The

[1] Rom. vi. 23.

fact is that no single similitude can represent the whole truth to which it corresponds, just as no portrait can give the whole of the human face, or a landscape the country side from every point of view. So that there is need of a complementary parable, or of more than one, to set forth aspects which the first parable necessarily overlooks. So it is with this Parable of the Labourers. It illustrates the great principle that service is in God's Kingdom the condition of reward; but it only partially represents the complementary principle that all Divine rewards are of grace and not of debt. It illustrates the further principle that the Divine rewards all run up ultimately into the one grant of eternal life, and that this belongs equally to all who have worked in God's vineyard, whether for a short time or a longer. But it does not in any way recognize the complementary principle that the gift of eternal life is of greater or less significance to the individual according as he has prepared himself to use it. As the uneducated ear cannot appreciate exquisite music, nor the uneducated eye the merits of a great painting, nor the uneducated mind the masterpieces of literature, so the untrained soul, that has but at the eleventh hour entered on the service of God, cannot, it may be argued, comprehend or enjoy the revelations of the life to come as those souls can who have spent a lifetime here in the work of the Lord. Nor can such persons be

entrusted in the next order with responsibilities so great or services so enthralling as fall to the share of those who have been long accustomed in this world to serve God in Church or State. We shall come again to this side of things when we study the Parable of the Talents. Meanwhile, it is enough to note that the Parable of the Labourers is incomplete in so far as it shews us the Christian's reward only from the point of view which was necessary for one particular purpose, that of correcting St. Peter's mistaken idea that the reward depends on mere length of service or the quantity of the work done. In point of fact the reward is one and the same for all true workers; the last and the first, through the mercy of God, fare alike in the Kingdom of God; none will have less than eternal life, and none can have more.

Two other parables of the Vineyard follow in St. Matthew; and though they have not definitely prefixed to them any reference to the Kingdom of Heaven, they are so near of kin to the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard that they must be considered here. Both were spoken in the Temple Court on the 'Day of Questions,' and to members of the Sanhedrin, priests and scribes and elders; for all these for once shewed a common front, and came to prove Him with the question, *By what authority doest thou these things?* [1]

[1] Mt. xxi. 23. ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς;

After the question had been met by another which they could not or would not answer, He had recourse to these parables, which were too pointed to miss their aim, and more likely to arrest the attention of the crowds who were within hearing than a direct exposure of His enemies would have been.

5. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Τί δὲ ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἄνθρωπος εἶχεν τέκνα δύο. προσελθὼν τῷ πρώτῳ εἶπεν Τέκνον, ὕπαγε σήμερον ἐργάζου ἐν τῷ ἀμπελῶνι· ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Ἐγώ, κύριε· καὶ οὐκ ἀπῆλθεν. προσελθὼν δὲ τῷ δευτέρῳ εἶπεν ὡσαύτως· ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Οὐ θέλω· ὕστερον μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπῆλθεν. τίς ἐκ τῶν δύο ἐποίησεν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός; λέγουσιν Ὁ ὕστερος. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οἱ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρναι προάγουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάνης πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης, καὶ οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ· οἱ δὲ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρναι ἐπίστευσαν αὐτῷ·

But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of the twain did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the

ὑμεῖς δὲ ἰδόντες οὐδὲ μετεμελήθητε ὕστερον τοῦ πιστεῦσαι αὐτῷ.

publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him.

St. Matthew xxi. 28-32.

In the two sons we see two opposite classes in Jewish society: the Pharisaic scribes on the one side, and sinners as the outcasts of society on the other. The one class professed obedience to the Divine will, the other had hitherto flatly refused it; but those who professed to obey, were in fact disobedient to the call of God by John Baptist and the Messiah, whereas those who began by refusing, had in many cases repented and obeyed, and thus had got the start of the professedly religious class in entering the Kingdom (*προάγουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ*).

You will see that in this parable also the law of the Kingdom of Heaven is that all its subjects work; it is not in our Lord's teaching, any more than in St. James', a faith without works that avails. But there is a subtle difference between the parables: in the Labourers in the Vineyard, the labourers are hired; here they are sons, and the father's command ought to suffice without hope of reward. The father does not hire his sons to work, nevertheless he looks to them to do so. Still they are not slaves; if they refuse, he does not compel; obedience is voluntary

and not a matter of necessity. There is here yet further light thrown on the constitution of the Kingdom: its labourers are free men, and if they serve, they serve as sons. This was so with Israel; the nation was God's 'son'[1]; scribes and publicans, if they were Jews, were alike children (*τέκνα*) of God. And this relation was to continue, nay, to be more fully realized in the Messianic Kingdom. *Ye*, St. Paul insists, *received not* (at baptism) *the spirit of bondage . . . but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*[2]

I turn to the second supplementary parable. It is given by the three Synoptists. We will take St. Mark's account, comparing the other two where they differ.

6. THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER AND THE UNFAITHFUL HUSBANDMEN

Καὶ ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλεῖν Ἀμπελῶνα ἄνθρωπος ἐφύτευσεν, καὶ περιέθηκεν φραγμὸν καὶ ὤρυξεν ὑπολήνιον καὶ ᾠκοδόμησεν πύργον, καὶ ἐξέδετο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν. καὶ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς

And he began to speak unto them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And

[1] Exod. iv. 22; Hosea xi. 1. [2] Rom. viii. 15.

τοὺς γεωργοὺς τῷ καιρῷ δοῦλον, ἵνα παρὰ τῶν γεωργῶν λάβῃ ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος· καὶ λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἔδειραν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν κενόν. καὶ πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἄλλον δοῦλον· κἀκεῖνον ἐκεφαλίωσαν καὶ ἠτίμασαν. καὶ ἄλλον ἀπέστειλεν· κἀκεῖνον ἀπέκτειναν, καὶ πολλοὺς ἄλλους, οὓς μὲν δέροντες οὓς δὲ ἀποκτεννύντες. ἔτι ἕνα εἶχεν, υἱὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν ἔσχατον πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγων ὅτι Ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱόν μου. ἐκεῖνοι δὲ οἱ γεωργοὶ πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς εἶπαν ὅτι Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· δεῦτε ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτόν, καὶ ἡμῶν ἔσται ἡ κληρονομία. καὶ λαβόντες ἀπέκτειναν αὐτόν, καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος. τί ποιήσει ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος; ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἀπολέσει τοὺς γεωργούς, καὶ δώσει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις. Οὐδὲ τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἀνέγνωτε

Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες,

at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard. And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed: and many others; beating some, and killing some. He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. Have ye not read even this scripture;

The stone which the builders rejected,

οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας·
παρὰ Κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη,
καὶ ἔστιν θαυμαστὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν;

The same was made the head of the corner:
This was from the Lord,
And it is marvellous in our eyes?
St. Mark xii. 1-11.[1]

THERE is a noteworthy difference between this parable and the Parable of the Labourers to which I have

[1] PARALLELS. ST. MATTHEW xxi. 33-45.

Ἀλλην παραβολὴν ἀκούσατε. Ἄνθρωπος ἦν οἰκοδεσπότης ὅστις ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα καὶ φραγμὸν αὐτῷ περιέθηκεν καὶ ὤρυξεν ἐν αὐτῷ ληνὸν καὶ ᾠκοδόμησεν πύργον, καὶ ἐξέδετο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν. ὅτε δὲ ἤγγισεν ὁ καιρὸς τῶν καρπῶν, ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς γεωργοὺς λαβεῖν τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτοῦ. καὶ λαβόντες οἱ γεωργοὶ τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ὃν μὲν ἔδειραν, ὃν δὲ ἀπέκτειναν, ὃν δὲ ἐλιθοβόλησαν. πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους πλείονας τῶν πρώτων, καὶ ἐποίησαν αὐτοῖς ὡσαύτως. ὕστερον δὲ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ λέγων Ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱόν μου. οἱ δὲ γεωργοὶ ἰδόντες τὸν υἱὸν εἶπον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· δεῦτε ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτὸν καὶ σχῶμεν τὴν κληρονομίαν αὐτοῦ· καὶ λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἐξέβαλον ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος καὶ ἀπέκτειναν. ὅταν οὖν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, τί ποιήσει τοῖς γεωργοῖς ἐκείνοις; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ Κακοὺς κακῶς ἀπολέσει αὐτούς, καὶ τὸν ἀμπελῶνα

Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner. But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. When therefore the lord of the vineyard

already referred. There the owner works his own vineyard; here he is an absentee proprietor, and does

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ἐκδώσεται ἄλλοις γεωργοῖς, οἵτινες ἀποδώσουσιν αὐτῷ τοὺς καρποὺς ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς αὐτῶν. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς

Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες
οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας·
παρὰ Κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη,
καὶ ἔστιν θαυμαστὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν;

διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀρθήσεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ δοθήσεται ἔθνει ποιοῦντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς. Καὶ ὁ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον τοῦτον συνθλασθήσεται· ἐφ' ὃν δ' ἂν πέσῃ λικμήσει αὐτόν. Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τὰς παραβολὰς αὐτοῦ ἔγνωσαν ὅτι περὶ αὐτῶν λέγει.

shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,

The stone which the builders rejected,
The same was made the he of the corner:
This was from the Lord,
And it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

ST. LUKE. xx. 9-18.

Ἤρξατο δὲ πρὸς τὸν λαὸν λέγειν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην Ἄνθρωπος ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα, καὶ ἐξέδετο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν χρόνους ἱκανούς. καὶ καιρῷ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς τοὺς γεωργοὺς δοῦλον, ἵνα ἀπὸ τοῦ καρποῦ τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος

And he began to speak unto the people this parable: A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country for a long time. And at the season he sent unto the husbandmen a servant,

not even come in person to demand his rent in kind, but sends his slaves, and eventually his son. His own

δώσουσιν αὐτῷ· οἱ δὲ γεωργοὶ ἐξαπέστειλαν αὐτὸν δείραντες κενόν. καὶ προσέθετο ἕτερον πέμψαι δοῦλον· οἱ δὲ κἀκεῖνον δείραντες καὶ ἀτιμάσαντες ἐξαπέστειλαν κενόν. καὶ προσέθετο τρίτον πέμψαι. οἱ δὲ καὶ τοῦτον τραυματίσαντες ἐξέβαλον. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος Τί ποιήσω; πέμψω τὸν υἱόν μου τὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἴσως τοῦτον ἐντραπήσονται. ἰδόντες δὲ αὐτὸν οἱ γεωργοὶ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγοντες Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτόν, ἵνα ἡμῶν γένηται ἡ κληρονομία· καὶ ἐκβαλόντες αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος ἀπέκτειναν. τί οὖν ποιήσει αὐτοῖς ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος; ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἀπολέσει τοὺς γεωργοὺς τούτους, καὶ δώσει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις. ἀκούσαντες δὲ εἶπαν Μὴ γένοιτο. ὁ δὲ ἐμβλέψας αὐτοῖς εἶπεν Τί οὖν ἐστὶν τὸ γεγραμμένον τοῦτο

Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες,
οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας;

πᾶς ὁ πεσὼν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν λίθον συνθλασθήσεται· ἐφ' ὃν δ' ἂν πέσῃ, λικμήσει αὐτόν.

that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And he sent yet another servant: and him also they beat, and handled him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And he sent yet a third: and him also they wounded, and cast him forth. And the lord of the vineyard said, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned one with another, saying, This is the heir: let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. And they cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. But he looked upon them, and said, What then is this that is written,

The stone which the builders rejected,
The same was made the head of the corner?

Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust.

coming is reserved for the ultimate step which has to be taken, that of ejecting the murderers and re-letting the farm. It becomes clear as the present parable proceeds that Christ means by the householder (ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης) His Heavenly Father. What then was the analogy between the relation of God at this time to the Jewish people and that of an absentee landlord to those who farmed his vineyard? What is this absence, this ἀποδημία, of God? I have no doubt that it represents the distance which actually existed between the religious leaders of Israel and the God of Israel, a distance which seemed to them to be the result of His withdrawal into the furthest heaven, but which was in truth due to their own withdrawal from Him; what the Lord elsewhere describes in the words of Isaiah; *This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me—* πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ' ἐμοῦ.[1] So that while the Parable of the Labourers shews the Divine Owner of the Vineyard in his real relation to it, rising up early as in the days of the prophets to call men into it, and all through the long day interesting Himself in His work, the Parable of the Husbandmen shews Him as He appeared to those whose hearts were far from Him; they mistook their own departure from Him for a departure on His side from them; the absence (ἀποδημία), which was really theirs, seemed to them

[1] Is. xxix. 13; Mt. xv. 8; Mc. vii. 6.

to be His ; they thought Him far off from them because they were in fact far off from Him. Yet even they must recognize that He had not forgotten them ; that He had sent His servants to them, and now at the last His Son and Heir, to claim from them His due.

No one who heard the parable could fail to understand our Lord's reference to Himself as the Beloved Son. That He should have spoken of Himself in these terms, and that in the presence of the members of the Sanhedrin and the people of Jerusalem is a startling fact. We remember the short charge given to the disciples, not far from the end of the Galilean ministry, that they should not make Him known as the Christ. But now He makes Himself known, before His enemies, and in the most public and sacred of all places. The time had come for the open proclamation of His Messiahship, now on the eve of His death. The Voice which in the Baptism proclaimed Him the Beloved Son must now be made to reach the very Sanhedrin. They were about to condemn Him, and if they did so it must be with the responsibility of full knowledge.

The Lord knew that they would accept the responsibility, and what the consequences would be to themselves and their children. The Owner will come at last in person ; there will be a terrible visitation of the Divine Vengeance : *He will destroy the husbandmen.* This had been even more plainly

expressed in the Parable of the Marriage Feast, when the murderers are not only destroyed but their city is burnt.[1] But the Parable of the Husbandmen has a feature of its own which touched the hearers even more closely: *He will give the vineyard to others.* The vineyard, the fenced protected life of God's own possession, is to pass from Jewish to Gentile hands. It was this prospect which called forth the fervent μὴ γένοιτο, *God forbid*, of that intensely Jewish audience. Yet it came to pass, as we know, and a new Israel was put in possession of the Vineyard and holds it still.

It must not be thought, however, that this parable has no message except for the Jews. No people, no nation or Church, has any permanent right to the Vineyard of God. It is in possession of the Vineyard for only so long a period as it renders the fruits to the Owner. When this ceases to be done the Vineyard will pass to other husbandmen. This inexorable law of God's dealings with nations and Churches can be seen in operation all along the course of Christian history. It is natural for each Church, each people, to think itself the solitary exception; we cannot, for instance, conceive of England without the Gospel and the Church. Yet so it may be, in generations to come; it will be if the Church fails to fulfil her proper function of rendering to God the fruits of the Spirit.

[1] Mt. xxii. 7.

The Kingdom of Heaven creates responsibilities and does not only bestow blessings; if its gifts are great, so are also its demands.

One more great group of parables in St. Matthew follows upon the Apocalyptic discourse of chapter xxiv. As the Lord sat on the Mount of Olives in full view of the Temple, which He had left for the last time, his four senior Apostles, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, came to Him with the question, *Tell us, when shall these things* [the fall of the Temple, of which He had just spoken] *be? and what is the sign of thy coming and of the consummation of the age?* [1] The three Synoptists introduce here an eschatological instruction of great length, which in St. Mark and St. Luke is immediately followed by the history of the Passion. St. Matthew places after this discourse and before the narrative of the Passion the parables of the Ten Virgins and the Talents, and the description, almost a parable in form, of the Last Judgement. This group stands alone as containing the only purely eschatological parables in the Gospels. They take us almost wholly away from the present. The third is wholly concerned with the future; the first and second though they rise out of the present find their centre of interest in the future. This key-note is struck when the first parable begins, not

[1] Mt. xxiv. 3; Mc. xiii. 3; Lc. xxi. 7.

'*The Kingdom of Heaven is like*' (ὁμοία ἐστίν or ὡμοιώθη), but '*Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened* (τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται); that is, 'this is a similitude the full significance of which will not be understood till the Parousia,' to which reference had been made in the preceding discourse, 'has been realized.'

7. THE PARABLE OF THE VIRGINS

Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν δέκα παρθένοις, αἵτινες λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας ἑαυτῶν ἐξῆλθον εἰς ὑπάντησιν τοῦ νυμφίου. πέντε δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἦσαν μωραὶ καὶ πέντε φρόνιμοι· αἱ γὰρ μωραὶ λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔλαβον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν ἔλαιον· αἱ δὲ φρόνιμοι ἔλαβον ἔλαιον ἐν τοῖς ἀγγείοις μετὰ τῶν λαμπάδων ἑαυτῶν. χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου ἐνύσταξαν πᾶσαι καὶ ἐκάθευδον. μέσης δὲ νυκτὸς κραυγὴ γέγονεν Ἰδοὺ ὁ νυμφίος, ἐξέρχεσθε εἰς ἀπάντησιν. τότε ἠγέρθησαν πᾶσαι αἱ παρθένοι ἐκεῖναι καὶ ἐκόσμησαν τὰς λαμπάδας ἑαυτῶν. αἱ δὲ μωραὶ ταῖς φρονίμοις εἶπαν Δότε ἡμῖν ἐκ

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise

τοῦ ἐλαίου ὑμῶν, ὅτι αἱ λαμπάδες ἡμῶν σβέννυνται. ἀπεκρίθησαν δὲ αἱ φρόνιμοι λέγουσαι Μήποτε οὐ μὴ ἀρκέσῃ ἡμῖν καὶ ὑμῖν· πορεύεσθε μᾶλλον πρὸς τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ ἀγοράσατε ἑαυταῖς. ἀπερχομένων δὲ αὐτῶν ἀγοράσαι ἦλθεν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ αἱ ἕτοιμοι εἰσῆλθον μετ' αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς γάμους, καὶ ἐκλείσθη ἡ θύρα. ὕστερον δὲ ἔρχονται καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ παρθένοι λέγουσαι Κύριε κύριε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν· ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς. Γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἡμέραν οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν.

answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward come also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.

St. Matthew xxv. 1–13.

AGAIN, as in the parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, we find ourselves in a nuptial scene. But here it is not to the banquet or the guests that attention is turned, but to a procession of maidens which meets the bridegroom and enters the banqueting-hall with him. The male friends of the bridegroom are mentioned in St. Mark (ii. 19) under the title *the sons of the bride-chamber*;[1] one who was specially in attendance on the bridegroom is called by St. John *the friend of the bridegroom*;[2] and it was

[1] οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος, the παρανύμφιοι of Greek writers.

[2] Jo iii. 29. ὁ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου.

these who formed the bodyguard of the bridegroom. It seems surprising to find a body of maidens, who were naturally the companions of the bride, attaching themselves to the bridegroom's procession. The bridegroom, however, went forth to the bride's house to claim and receive her, and it would be on his way from the bride's house, after she was in the company, that the maidens would join the procession. Hence the addition to the first verse, '*and the bride*,'[1] made by some Western authorities, even if not part of the original parable,[2] is doubtless true to fact: the maidens went to meet not the bridegroom and his friends only, but the bridegroom and the bride, and to accompany both to the bridegroom's house where the banquet was to follow.

The procession took place at night, and the maidens were therefore provided with torches. Λαμπάς may undoubtedly in late colloquial Greek mean a 'lamp,'[3] but it is possible to keep to the usual meaning here by understanding by the word a torch fed from a small socket round the flame which contained oil. In either case the supply of oil was so small that the slightest foresight would have suggested the carrying of an ἀγγεῖον, a portable small oil can, from which

[1] *v.* 1. +καὶ τῆς νύμφης DX*1*alSyr$^{sin.\ pesh}$armvg (*obviam sponso et sponsae*).

[2] Of this I am myself by no means sure.

[3] Cf. Judith x. 22. ἐξῆλθεν [Ὀλοφέρνης] καὶ λαμπάδες ἀργυραῖ προάγουσαι αὐτοῦ.

the light could be fed. But young maidens are not always remarkable for their forethought, and among these ten (a round number) half were *μωραί*, *thoughtless*, and only half *φρόνιμοι*, *wise*, with their wits about them. It is worth while to remember that more than once in the Gospels to be *φρόνιμος* is made the criterion of fitness for the service of God. The man who hears Christ's sayings and does them is likened to a *wise man*, *ἀνδρὶ φρονίμῳ*,[1] the servants of Christ are to be *wise as serpents*, *φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὄφεις*,[2] *wise*, *φρόνιμοι*, as well as *trustworthy*, *πιστοί*;[3] and He complained that *The sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light*, *φρονιμώτεροι ὑπὲρ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός*.[4] It was thoughtlessness which cost these maidens their place at the marriage banquet, but a thoughtlessness which lasted till the very end; for while the bridegroom delayed, there was still abundance of time to have rectified the original mistake. When the hard fact of the approaching failure of the lamps (*σβέννυνται*) recalled them to their senses, it was too late, and the effort then made did not avail as an excuse. There is certainly the appearance of churlishness in the refusal of the more thoughtful maidens to share their oil with the unfortunates; prudent people are not always very generous; and the bridegroom who refuses to open the door and investigate the case of

[1] Mt. vii. 24. [2] Mt. x. 16. [3] Mt. xxiv. 45. [4] Lc. xvi. 8.

the excluded may seem over-stern. These imperfections belong to the exigencies of the story and disappear when we come to interpret it.

The Bridegroom of the parable without a doubt represents our Lord in His relation to the Church. When the Pharisees complained *Thy disciples fast not*, our Lord's answer was, *As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast*,[1] plainly identifying Himself with the bridegroom. He is the King's Son for whom, in the Parable of the Marriage Feast, the King, God Himself, has made a nuptial feast at His house, that is, in the heavenly state. Men are called to this feast while they are on earth, and they fill the house of God by becoming members of the Church. Still the banquet has not actually begun, and cannot begin till the Parousia. The Parousia is from this new point of view the coming of the Bridegroom to fetch His Bride. The Bride of Christ is not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels, for the time had not come when she could be identified; but the Johannine writings speak of her;[2] and St. Paul, though he does not use the word *νύμφη*, bride, leaves us in no doubt as to the interpretation: *Husbands, love your wives, according as Christ also loved the church . . . that he might present unto himself the church in glory.*[3]

[1] Mc. ii. 19. [2] Jo. iii. 29; Apoc. xxi. 2; xxii. 17.
[3] Eph. v. 25, 27.

But if the Bride is the Church, who are the maidens that go forth to meet the Bridegroom and the Bride? Let us turn for a clue to an early Christian presentation of the Parousia which we find in 1 Thess. iv. 14: *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also will God bring with Jesus those that fell asleep through him . . . For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet-blast of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive, who are left* on earth, *shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord, into the air.* In several respects this early Christian conception answers closely to the Lord's parable. The Lord brings with Him the great majority of those who are His, all who up to the moment of His coming have fallen asleep; the generation which is yet on earth rises to meet Him at His coming. The phrase *to meet the Lord*, *εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου*, might even seem to be modelled on the words *to meet the bridegroom*, *εἰς ὑπάντησιν τοῦ νυμφίου*. Even the midnight cry of the parable has its equivalent in *the shout*, the *κέλευσμα*, which will wake the dead. At this rate, then, the Bride will be the dead in Christ, and the maidens who go forth to meet the Bridegroom the 'quick,' as they are called in the creed—the last generation of the living Church. But as every generation while its time endures is the last,

we may see in the Virgins each generation as it passes by: all Christian souls which are still in this world. All Christian souls in this world have gone forth to meet the Lord; they have been sent forth from the font, each with the lighted torch of faith and hope and love, which they must keep alive till the Lord comes. In the old Sarum *ritus baptizandi*, almost immediately after the threefold immersion, the priest put for an instant into the hand of the child a lighted taper with the words: *Accipe lampadem ardentem et irreprehensibilem; custodi baptismum tuum, serua mandata, ut cum uenerit Dominus ad nuptias, possis ei occurrere una cum sanctis in aula celesti—Receive a torch burning and irreproachable; guard thy baptism, keep the commandments, that when the Lord cometh to the wedding, thou mayest be able to meet Him together with the Saints in the heavenly home.* That symbolical action had obvious inconveniences which led to its disuse by our Reformers, but it was surely a valuable piece of realism, and as far as it went a true interpretation of the maidens' torches in the parable. Life is for all baptized Christians a going forth through the darkness with a torch lit by God the Holy Spirit at the font, and with a definite goal, which is to meet the Bridegroom, to join His great procession, and enter with it His Father's House, where there are many mansions. It is this lighted torch and this definite end which distinguishes

the life of a Christian from lives which are not distinctively Christian, or definitely non-Christian.

Thus the parable refers to the baptized only and those of the baptized who maintain their Christian profession to the end. But even among these there is a vital difference as the parable proceeds to shew.

The Bridegroom was long in coming (*χρονίζοντος*[1]). At least the time seemed long, because of the darkness of the night, and the monotony of waiting in the dark. He was not perhaps really after time.[2] But in the broader outlook of the parable the sense of delay may be taken to refer to the whole tendency of human nature to treat the last things as infinitely remote. Children, it is said, think or at least speak more of death than the old; and it is certain that our own age, so far advanced in the world's life, is far less disposed to be eschatological than was the first. We put off the end, if there is to be one, as far as possible; we say in our hearts 'The bridegroom tarrieth'—*χρονίζει ὁ νύμφιος*. Meanwhile at times the Church is tempted to grow drowsy like people who nod over their work (*ἐνύσταζον*), and even to sleep outright. This is not represented as in any way peculiar to the thoughtless; the Lord says *to*

[1] Cf. Mt. xxiv. 48: *χρονίζει μου ὁ κύριος.*

[2] Cf. Heb. x. 37: *ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει·* and also *The Lord is not slack . . . as some men count slackness* in 2 Peter, a second century document, written when the hope of an imminent Advent had been abandoned (2 Pet. iii. 9).

all, Watch, be wakeful, γρηγορεῖτε,[1] for He knows what is in man and expects slumber. The most vigilant life is in His sight broken by intervals of spiritual drowsiness; as one who is on guard starts up again and again, finding himself overcome in spite of his efforts, so it is with even the best of Christians.

At midnight all are roused by the cry, *The Bridegroom cometh.* In the preceding discourse the Lord had said, *Ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether late in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or at early dawn*:[2] so that *midnight* must not be taken here as referring to the particular age when He will come, but only as denoting that the waiting had been long and that darkness still reigned. In the early Church there was a notion, perhaps partly founded on these words, that the Coming would be at midnight on some dark and stormy Easter Eve, and the faithful used to spend the night before Easter in the churches, watching till the dawn came. But such realism is quite absent from the Lord's teaching; and the sense is rather 'just when men are saying or thinking "it is too late now, He will not come to-night," the Coming will take place.'

At the cry all rose at once and trimmed their torches. In this action we recognize easily the special preparation for death and judgement which

[1] Mc. xiii. 37. [2] Mc. xiii. 35.

all souls would desire to make; the self-recollection, prayer, Holy Communion—without which no well-instructed Christian would willingly pass into the immediate presence of God. But such preparation, if it is to be of any avail, implies that the soul has lived in a state of grace; that it has, over and above the grace of Baptism and Confirmation, the grace with which it started on its course, that habitual indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is available for the time of need: oil in the vessel as well as in the torch. Those who have not this, need to do more than to trim their lamps; they must go and buy for themselves, and that at a moment when time is running short. We who have been parish priests have seen this only too often in actual life: the rude awakening with which souls are roused at the last to find their light going out just when its full brightness is most needed; the eager hurry with which they seek to repair the neglects of the past years by crowding into the broken intervals which sickness allows preparation that ought to have been continuous; the terrible suspicion that after all they will hear the voice

'Too late! too late! ye cannot enter now.'

We have seen this in actual life—you will see it in days to come, when you are in charge of parishes. And the Lord seems to teach in this parable that what takes place occasionally in our own experience

will occur on a great scale in the day of His last appearing.

Exclusion from the joys of the Messianic Kingdom is in this parable traced back to nothing worse than thoughtless folly. There lies the infinite pathos of the scene. Those who enter, and those who are shut out, are alike friends of the Bride: virgins, innocent of the world's worst vices; to the last they have been waiting for the Bridegroom: their torches are still alight when His cry is heard. They represent religious people, Church-people, people who are to be found at the Altar, people who to the last are sincere in their profession of the Christian faith, as may be seen from the pains they are at to prepare for death. The clergy are called to visit hundreds of persons whose case is far worse: who are absolutely indifferent or openly hostile; who defy God and Christ with their last breath, or at least make it evident that their hopes and desires are bounded by the present life. These, if ever they went forth to meet the Bridegroom, have long since turned back; their lamps, if ever lit, have gone out. But the virgins of the parable are not such, and it is perhaps only at the last that they discover themselves to be in danger of falling short of the great reward. They have never seriously thought of the matter or taken any steps about it, till thought, or at least action, has become well nigh impossible. Failures in the religious life

are perhaps most frequently due to want of thought; it is not realized till too late that want of thought in the things of the Kingdom of God means a culpable want of thoroughness, of personal religion, of readiness for the purely spiritual life of the world to come. The conditions of our modern Christianity lend themselves with great ease to such thoughtlessness, and therefore invite special attention to this very far-reaching parable.

From the Ten Virgins St. Matthew goes on without break or preface to the Talents, which must therefore be taken to be another parable of the Kingdom.

8. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Ὥσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδημῶν ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ᾧ μὲν ἔδωκεν πέντε τάλαντα ᾧ δὲ δύο ᾧ δὲ ἕν, ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν. εὐθέως πορευθεὶς ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν ἠργάσατο ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα πέντε· ὡσαύτως ὁ τὰ δύο ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα δύο· ὁ δὲ τὸ ἓν λαβὼν ἀπελθὼν ὤρυξεν γῆν καὶ	*For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received*

ἔκρυψεν τὸ ἀργύριον τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ. μετὰ δὲ πολὺν χρόνον ἔρχεται ὁ κύριος τῶν δούλων ἐκείνων καὶ συναίρει λόγον μετ' αὐτῶν. καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν προσήνεγκεν ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα λέγων Κύριε, πέντε τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας· ἴδε ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα. ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ Εὖ, δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἦς πιστός, ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου. προσελθὼν καὶ ὁ τὰ δύο τάλαντα εἶπεν Κύριε, δύο τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας· ἴδε ἄλλα δύο τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα. ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ Εὖ, δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἦς πιστός, ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου. προσελθὼν δὲ καὶ ὁ τὸ ἓν τάλαντον εἰληφὼς εἶπεν Κύριε, ἔγνων σε ὅτι σκληρὸς εἶ ἄνθρωπος, θερίζων ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρας καὶ συνάγων ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισας· καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἀπελθὼν ἔκρυψα τὸ τάλαντόν σου ἐν τῇ γῇ· ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτῷ

the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou

Πονηρὲ δοῦλε καὶ ὀκνηρέ, ᾔδεις ὅτι θερίζω ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρα καὶ συνάγω ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισα; ἔδει σε οὖν βαλεῖν τὰ ἀργύριά μου τοῖς τραπεζείταις, καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐγὼ ἐκομισάμην ἂν τὸ ἐμὸν σὺν τόκῳ. ἄρατε οὖν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ τάλαντον καὶ δότε τῷ ἔχοντι τὰ δέκα τάλαντα· τῷ γὰρ ἔχοντι παντὶ δοθήσεται καὶ περισσευθήσεται· τοῦ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. καὶ τὸν ἀχρεῖον δοῦλον ἐκβάλετε εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter: and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

St. Matthew xxv. 14-30.

Like the Marriage of the King's Son, this parable has its double in St. Luke, the Parable of the Pounds;

and the likeness between them is even closer than that between the Marriage of the King's Son, and the Great Supper. Nevertheless there is no ground whatever for treating them as two versions or recensions of a single parable spoken by Christ; to do so is wholly arbitrary, for why should not our Lord have used the same general conception twice, modifying it only so far as might be necessary to suit the circumstances? Let us read the second parable.

9. THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

Ἀκουόντων δὲ αὐτῶν ταῦτα προσθεὶς εἶπεν παραβολὴν διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι Ἰερουσαλὴμ αὐτὸν καὶ δοκεῖν αὐτοὺς ὅτι παραχρῆμα μέλλει ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναφαίνεσθαι· εἶπεν οὖν Ἄνθρωπός τις εὐγενὴς ἐπορεύθη εἰς χώραν μακρὰν λαβεῖν ἑαυτῷ βασιλείαν καὶ ὑποστρέψαι. καλέσας δὲ δέκα δούλους ἑαυτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς δέκα μνᾶς καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς πραγματεύσασθαι ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι. Οἱ δὲ πολῖται αὐτοῦ ἐμίσουν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀπέστειλαν πρεσβείαν ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ λέγοντες Οὐ θέλομεν τοῦτον βασιλεῦσαι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς. Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐπανελθεῖν

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us. And it

αὐτὸν λαβόντα τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ εἶπεν φωνηθῆναι αὐτῷ τοὺς δούλους τούτους οἷς δεδώκει τὸ ἀργύριον, ἵνα γνοῖ τί διεπραγματεύσαντο. παρεγένετο δὲ ὁ πρῶτος λέγων Κύριε, ἡ μνᾶ σου δέκα προσηργάσατο μνᾶς. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Εὖγε, ἀγαθὲ δοῦλε, ὅτι ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ πιστὸς ἐγένου, ἴσθι ἐξουσίαν ἔχων ἐπάνω δέκα πόλεων. καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ δεύτερος λέγων Ἡ μνᾶ σου, κύριε, ἐποίησεν πέντε μνᾶς. εἶπεν δὲ καὶ τούτῳ Καὶ σὺ ἐπάνω γίνου πέντε πόλεων. καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ἦλθεν λέγων Κύριε, ἰδοὺ ἡ μνᾶ σου ἣν εἶχον ἀποκειμένην ἐν σουδαρίῳ· ἐφοβούμην γάρ σε ὅτι ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἶ, αἴρεις ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκας καὶ θερίζεις ὃ οὐκ ἔσπειρας. λέγει αὐτῷ Ἐκ τοῦ στόματός σου κρίνω σε, πονηρὲ δοῦλε· ᾔδεις ὅτι ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρός εἰμι, αἴρων ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκα καὶ θερίζων ὃ οὐκ ἔσπειρα; καὶ διὰ τί οὐκ ἔδωκάς μου τὸ ἀργύριον ἐπὶ τράπεζαν; κἀγὼ ἐλθὼν σὺν τόκῳ ἂν αὐτὸ ἔπραξα. καὶ τοῖς παρεστῶσιν εἶπεν Ἄρατε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὴν μνᾶν καὶ δότε τῷ τὰς δέκα μνᾶς ἔχοντι. καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ

came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more. And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds. And he said unto him also, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that I laid

Κύριε, ἔχει δέκα μνᾶς· λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι παντὶ τῷ ἔχοντι δοθήσεται, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται. Πλὴν τοὺς ἐχθρούς μου τούτους τοὺς μὴ θελήσαντάς με βασιλεῦσαι ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἀγάγετε ὧδε καὶ κατασφάξατε αὐτοὺς ἔμπροσθέν μου. Καὶ εἰπὼν ταῦτα ἐπορεύετο ἔμπροσθεν ἀναβαίνων εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα.

not down, and reaping that I did not sow; then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest? And he said unto them that stood by, Take away from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds. And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds. I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him. Howbeit these mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

And when he had thus spoken, he went on before, going up to Jerusalem.

St. Luke xix. 11–28.

The Parable of the Pounds was spoken on the way to Jerusalem, in fact near Jericho, and we are told by St. Luke what its purpose was. It was spoken *because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear*; its aim was, that is, to discourage the

expectation of an immediate Messianic reign, to push it on to a still distant future—to the Return or Parousia, before which there was much that must happen. The nobleman in this Lucan story is about to take his journey into a distant country for the special purpose of claiming, as Archelaus did from Augustus, the title of king. But he is followed by ambassadors who protest against his claim, and refuse to accept him as their king. However he is successful, and on his return, in the true spirit of an oriental prince, his first act is to destroy the men who had disputed his right to the kingdom. Of all this there is not a trace in St. Matthew's Parable of the Talents, which fixes our attention solely on the servants and their fulfilment of the trust committed to them. Its purpose is not, like the Parable of the Pounds, to dispel the notion that the Messianic Kingdom was about to appear immediately, and that the Parousia was at hand, but simply the practical aim of putting before all disciples of Christ the necessity for a strenuous fulfilment of their responsibilities. Besides, the differences in detail are numerous and considerable, far greater than can possibly have been due to editorial manipulation. In the first place the money left in St. Luke is only in all ten *minas*, let us say £40; whereas in St. Matthew it is eight talents, let us say not far from £2000, in fact the man's whole available property, *τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ*. Then in St. Luke

the money is equally divided, each slave receiving a single *mina*; whereas in St. Matthew, they receive five or two talents or one, according to their ability. Lastly, the rate of increase is quite different, for in St. Luke one servant makes of his pound ten pounds, and another five, whereas in St. Matthew each exactly doubles what he has received. Evidently service is regarded in the two parables from distinct points of view: the one is intended to shew what different results can be produced by men who start with the same initial advantages, and the other how men's opportunities of service are made to correspond to their power of using them. There is, however, one very marked feature which is common to the two stories, namely, the folly of the slothful servant, who in both deliberately lets his lord's money lie idle through a wrongheaded and unjust suspicion, and so incurs the penalty of having the deposit taken from him in the end. The repetition of this part of the story, almost word for word, must have made a deep impression on the Twelve, and doubtless was meant to have this effect.

We may now come to St. Matthew's parable, the Parable of the Talents, and examine it in detail.

As in the Parable of the Husbandmen, the master goes abroad (ἀποδημεῖ) and stays there for months or years. But the Master is here—in the Pounds quite clearly, and here with practical certainty

(Lc. xxiv. 44)—the Son of Man, the Messiah; and therefore the absence, *ἀποδημία*, has reference, not as in the former parable, to the Jewish nation, but to the Church. It is His withdrawal, for centuries as it has proved, from the world of phenomena, into that unseen order, which however near us as it may be, must always seem to us while we are here 'very far off.' He was even now, as He spoke, *ἀποδημῶν*, setting out on His journey: the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, its three stages were all to be taken within the next six weeks. To Him it was going back to the Father: to them, and He puts Himself in their position, it was a going away from the world itself.

Before He goes, the Master calls his slaves, and hands over to them his property—*τὰ ὑπάρχοντα*—not, of course, his lands and hereditaments, but all the loose cash and regular income of the estate. Only three of the slaves are mentioned, but the sums entrusted to them are large; he who received least was put in charge of about £240; he who had most received in trust a sum equivalent to £1200. The talent is here taken as the minimum rather than the mina, because the purpose of this parable is to shew the high estimate of the spiritual powers and gifts committed to them. It is no slight misfortune that, through a perverse misinterpretation of this parable, 'talent' and 'talents' have come to mean in popular

English 'singular natural gifts.' Such gifts correspond rather to the 'several ability' of the recipients than to the talents entrusted to them by the departing lord. The talents of the parable are (primarily at least) spiritual not natural gifts, *the powers of the world to come*,[1] the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the Spirit of Christ distributes to every man severally as He will. But the distribution is not, though it may seem to be, arbitrary, but nicely proportioned to each man's power to use the gifts. There are in Christ's service men of very small mental capacity on whom it would be a waste of spiritual power to bestow high gifts for the greater ministries, though they may in lower ranks of service do excellent work according to their own measure. In the Parable of the Talents, where our Lord is speaking to the Twelve only, even the man with the least capacity receives a whole talent, in itself a large sum, because He is dealing here with those in office or in high position in the Church; whereas in the Parable of the Pounds, where all receive the uniform and moderate trust of a single *mina*, the rank and file of the Church are in view, the great majority of Christian men and women who are called to live uneventful lives, and between whom there is little discernible difference of capacity. But even among those who hold office in the Church or are distinguished by unusual powers there are wide

[1] Heb. vi. 5.

differences, corresponding to the differences between trusts of five talents, two talents, one talent; and we are bound to believe that these differences are not due to accident, but to the wise disposition of the Spirit of Christ who has discovered in each a natural fitness for the use of the measure of spiritual gifts which he has imparted.[1]

In two of the cases described this discretion is fully vindicated. But the one talent fails entirely of its purpose, and this point requires our close attention. What does it mean?

First, let us see what occurs. The man does not waste or embezzle the money, like the Unfaithful Steward. Nor is he altogether heedless of his trust; he realizes that he must give an account of it, and that it must be kept safe, and he does his best to keep it; if it is large he buries it in the earth, as people often did with treasure;[2] in the Pounds, where the sum is small, he wraps it in a cloth for safety. It might even be said that he took more care of the money entrusted to him than the other two had done, for they speculated with theirs, while he kept his untouched. Only that was not the purpose for which it was given him. In the Pounds this is stated distinctly, that he *said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come*—εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς πραγματεύσασθαι ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι;[3] in the Talents it is implied, for why

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. xii. 1-11. [2] Mt. xiii. 44. [3] Lc. xix. 13.

otherwise were the servants given sums varying *according to their several ability*—*κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν*? Their attitude towards the gift of the Spirit was to be active, and not passive only; the law of the Kingdom of Heaven demands not simply the preservation of what we receive from God, but its increase. This is seen in all the parables of vegetable growth: the seed must be committed to the ground, and die, and so bring forth some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some a hundred-fold, but in every case a multiple of the original. So the one talent ought to be increased to two, if not more; but to do this the man in charge of it must incur responsibility, and lay out his talent that he may make it more. The active use of opportunities or powers is an essential part of our duty to Christ; he who simply keeps what he has, really betrays his trust, as he will one day discover to his sorrow and perhaps to his great surprise.

In this unhappy result of a wasted life there is a timely warning for the Church; but rather for the Church of these latter days than for the Christians of the first century. In the age of the Apostles, in the age of persecution that followed, it was difficult for a man to keep his faith without strenuous effort. Many, of course, threw their trust away, but few perhaps buried it. St. Paul indeed has the warning *τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί*, *In diligence be not slothful*,[1]

[1] Rom. xii. 11.

but slothfulness must have been in most Christian communities a comparatively rare fault. In our time, on the contrary, it is one of the commonest; nothing is easier than to drift into a state of spiritual inactivity, which as it were keeps its talent buried or wrapt away safely enough, but turns it to no present purpose. There is, it is true, a vast amount of religious zeal and life around us; we can see the five talents of one man yielding another five, and the two of another yielding other two; but meanwhile, what is the one yielding? The religious activity of our time is great, but it is not, if you consider it, equally distributed among all Christians; there are a large number of Church-people who are certainly not irreligious, but who are taking no part whatever in this 'work' of 'the Church.' And when our Lord likens inactive Christians to the servant to whom one talent was committed and who buried it, has He not put His finger upon the real causes of religious sloth? There is first the very mistaken notion that activity in religious matters is only for those who have marked spiritual powers; that those who are just ordinary Christians cannot aspire to do more than retain their own faith, without attempting to influence others or to take any part in Christian work. But, as both the parables suggest, the certain end of inactivity is that such persons in the end lose their own faith; *From him that hath not*—for what we do not use

is practically not ours—*even that which he hath* (or *seems to have*) *shall be taken away*. It is an inevitable law for the spiritual life which works itself out in many lives before our eyes, and may have yet graver issues in the world to come. But there is a second and still worse error which accounts for religious inactivity in some cases: a wrong view of God and of Christ, as a hard and exacting taskmaster. Not a few shrink from religious acts because they entail responsibility, and thus really increase the burden of the account which they will have to render to their Judge. The most familiar example is the extraordinary fear which the men, especially but not only amongst our working classes, have of Holy Communion. It is a commonplace among the parochial clergy that, especially in villages, they cannot induce the working men to communicate. The reason is not, I am persuaded, indifference; these same men will come, at great cost, to other services and to sermons. But their minds are possessed by St. Paul's words, or rather by an unhappy translation of St. Paul's words, about the danger of unworthy communion, and they see behind the Sacrament of Love an angry God ready to condemn them if they go to His altar and afterwards fall away. God, Christ, is to these *a severe*, σκληρός, *a stern man*, αὐστηρὸς ἄνθρωπος, such as some earthly masters they have known, only immeasurably more powerful; and they

are afraid, and bury through a long life that one most precious talent of theirs, the privilege of Holy Communion, with all the possibilities of spiritual life which it contains. This is but one instance of the tendency to which I refer, but it is a crucial one, and one which we encounter on a large scale.

The conception of God, even of Christ, as a severe, exacting, master ought, in strict logic, as the parables shew, to make men the more diligent; but in practice it has the opposite effect. It is love and not fear that inspires work; the happy reward, and not the expectation of punishment.

Of the rewards of the good and faithful servant both parables speak. In the Pounds the Lord says to him, *Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ, have thou authority over ten cities* (or five according to his work done). In the Talents, *Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα, I will set thee over many things—ἐπὶ πολλῶν: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* In the former, you will observe, the reward is graduated, in the latter it is, as in the Labourers in the Vineyard, the same for all; the two views representing different aspects, as we saw, of eternal life, which is in itself the same for all, but must vary widely in fact according to individual character and capacity.

There is, however, one quite new feature in these

parables, for they speak of the reward of eternal life under the figure of a position of command or authority. This belongs in part to the scenery of the parable and varies accordingly; the *cities* over which authority is given in the Pounds are suggested by the Kingdom which the Master is gone to receive, and the *many things* over which the faithful servants in the Talents are set are no doubt more talents, larger trusts drawn from the Master's unlimited wealth. But the two presentations have in common a principle which belongs, we cannot doubt, to the innermost truth of things. The right use of any powers, of any office, of any opportunities which we have here, will bring its reward in increased, extended, permanent powers, ministries, opportunities: God is through His servants' use of these capacities preparing them for the far greater services of the future world. To give only two examples from the number of those who have lately left us. Who can doubt that a great Christian scientist like Lord Kelvin[1] has before him in the ages to come ever-growing fields of investigation and discovery? or that a great Christian bishop like George Howard Wilkinson[1] will find there new and wider fields of pastoral oversight? And so on; but I will not pursue the tempting but overbold course of following

[1] Lord Kelvin had died on Dec. 17th, 1907, and Bishop Wilkinson of St. Andrews on Dec. 10th, 1907, shortly before the delivery of these lectures.

the greater servants of God into their bliss. What is of more personal importance to us is to see how the right use of the single mina, the *very little*, ἐλάχιστον, of Christian opportunity brings to any ordinary Christian worker the promise of a larger field of congenial work in the Messianic Kingdom. He too has his *Well done*! his εὖγε, and his new *authority*, ἐξουσία, suited to his powers. We may compare the message to Thyatira, *He that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations.*[1] It is a prospect which is not limited to people of great natural or spiritual ability; and we try in vain to see how it is to be realized, unless it be that wonderful power which simple goodness has, even here, to influence and control natures which are not to be moved by any other force. The full power of Christian holiness remains to be seen and felt in another order.

There is one more point, a difficult point, in the parable, on which I must say a word. How are we to understand the giving of the talent or mina, which had been taken from the unfaithful servant, to him who already had ten? To the bystanders it seemed unfair: *Sir*, they exclaimed, *he has ten minas:* why add another? But the Master's act was quite deliberate, and he justifies it in the words *To every one that hath shall be given*: the right use, that is, of what

[1] Apoc. ii. 26.

we have not only secures its continuance, but brings an added measure of grace. That is intelligible; but why is the good servant represented as being enriched by the ruin of the bad? It reminds us of what St. Paul says about the Gentile taking the place abandoned by the Jew, and of the warning in the message to Philadelphia, *Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.*[1] It would seem as if there were a law in the spiritual world, that that which one forfeits through his own sin or folly passes to another, so that though the individual suffers, the Church loses nothing; and certainly we see this in common life; others soon step in to fill up places we vacate, so that the loss is only our own. And it must be remembered that the added mina means added responsibility and added work, for the pound is to be laid out for the Master, not for the benefit of the man who receives it. If a man refuses God's work, it does not fall through because of his cowardice, but is laid on one who has shewn by what he has already done that he can and will do that which the other has in fact declined.

When we compare the Parable of the Talents with that of the Ten Virgins which immediately precedes it, we see that they represent the Christian life under two complementary aspects: as a life of watching and of active work. In the Virgins we see the need

[1] Apoc. iii. 11.

of vigilance and alertness of spirit; in the Talents, the need of activity and the fearless taking up of our responsibilities, whatever they may be. It is the union of these two sides of life in Christ which makes true discipleship; the union of vigilance with activity, of a keen outlook into the future with a deep interest in the work of the present, of other-worldliness with this-worldliness, of watching with working. The last instructions and parables of our Lord's Ministry are full of this double note, and it is one which we shall do well to be continually proclaiming: for a life which fails either in thoughtfulness or in practical activity falls short of Christ's standard, and loses something of the full reward.

After Epiphany

10. THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS
OR
THE JUDGEMENT

The 25th chapter of St. Matthew ends with another narrative which is perhaps hardly to be called a parable, for it speaks quite plainly of the Son of Man in His glory, and the nations of the earth standing before Him. Nevertheless, the whole narrative is clearly a drama of the Judgement, not to be taken as literally true; it has at least parabolic elements, and may, I think, be rightly taken as the crowning glory of the Parables of the Kingdom.

Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ, τότε καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ, καὶ συναχθήσονται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ ἀφορίσει αὐτοὺς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, ὥσπερ ὁ ποιμὴν ἀφορίζει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων, καὶ στήσει τὰ μὲν πρόβατα ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ τὰ δὲ ἐρίφια ἐξ εὐωνύμων. τότε ἐρεῖ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῖς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ Δεῦτε, οἱ εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρός μου, κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου· ἐπείνασα γὰρ καὶ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, ἐδίψησα καὶ ἐποτίσατέ με, ξένος ἤμην καὶ συνηγάγετέ με, γυμνὸς καὶ περιεβάλετέ με, ἠσθένησα καὶ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με, ἐν φυλακῇ ἤμην καὶ ἤλθατε πρός με. τότε ἀποκριθήσονται αὐτῷ οἱ δίκαιοι λέγοντες Κύριε, πότε σε εἴδαμεν πεινῶντα καὶ ἐθρέψαμεν, ἢ διψῶντα καὶ ἐποτίσαμεν; πότε δέ σε εἴδαμεν ξένον καὶ συνηγάγομεν, ἢ γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν; πότε δέ σε εἴδομεν ἀσθενοῦντα ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ ἤλθομεν πρός

But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick,

σε; καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐρεῖ αὐτοῖς Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἑνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε. τότε ἐρεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἐξ εὐωνύμων Πορεύεσθε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ κατηραμένοι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον τὸ ἡτοιμασμένον τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ· ἐπείνασα γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἐδώκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, καὶ ἐδίψησα καὶ οὐκ ἐποτίσατέ με, ξένος ἤμην καὶ οὐ συνηγάγετέ με, γυμνὸς καὶ οὐ περιεβάλετέ με, ἀσθενὴς καὶ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐκ ἐπεσκέψασθέ με. τότε ἀποκριθήσονται καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγοντες Κύριε, πότε σε εἴδομεν πεινῶντα ἢ διψῶντα ἢ ξένον ἢ γυμνὸν ἢ ἀσθενῆ ἢ ἐν φυλακῇ καὶ οὐ διηκονήσαμέν σοι; τότε ἀποκριθήσεται αὐτοῖς λέγων Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ' ὅσον οὐκ ἐποιήσατε ἑνὶ τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε. καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

St. Matthew xxv. 31–46.

Perhaps nothing else in the Gospels, or even in the New Testament, has made so deep and general an impression upon the world as this Parable, if it may be so called, of the Last Judgement. But for that very reason it needs careful consideration, for what is very familiar is apt to be misunderstood.

The scene is laid as it were on the morrow of the Parousia. The Lord had come at last (ὅταν ἔλθῃ). He had already judged His own servants, excluding from the joys of the Messianic Kingdom those who were not ready (xxv. 12), taking away positions of trust from those who had not turned them to good use (xxv. 28). He had judged also His determined enemies, those who had deliberately rejected His sovereignty (Lc. xix. 27). And now He proceeds to judge the rest of mankind. We see a glorious throne set up on earth, and before it are marshalled all the nations of the world—τὰ ἔθνη,—the Gentile nations, as His hearers would understand the word, without distinction of race or creed. Even among these He will discover abundant materials for exercising His judicial authority, as the sequel shews.

His first act is to part the whole countless multitude, as by an unerring intuition, into two homogeneous flocks. He does this as easily as a shepherd parts sheep and goats ; their moral and spiritual differences are as clear to His mind as the visible differences that strike the shepherd's eye. It is like the parting

of the wheat and darnel, which is far too intricate a task to be attempted in this tangled world, but will be simple enough even for angels to accomplish when the harvest is come. So here: all the nations are sent to the right or to the left of the Judge, without evidence taken: the Eye of Flame judges infallibly, merely making visible distinctions which had always existed invisibly in character and life.

Next, the King turns to the right and addresses this flock. They are called to inherit their predestined kingdom. The Kingdom of God and of Christ has come; the Lord has returned, having received His Kingdom (Lc. xix. 15), and these, His Father's children and heirs, His co-heirs, are now to enter on possession with Him.[1] It has been prepared for them from the beginning of the creation and before it,[2] for God lays up in store for His children from the first more than men can understand (1 Cor. ii. 9). But why have these on the right been singled out? How has their sonship, their right to the inheritance, been demonstrated? One and only one crucial test is employed. They are known by their attitude during life to the Only-begotten Son. And how are the rest known *not* to be children and heirs of God? By the lack of any such attitude towards Jesus Christ. From both sides there comes a protest; neither the

[1] Cf. 1 Pet. ii. 9; Rom. viii. 17; Apoc. i. 6; xxii. 5.

[2] Eph. i. 4; Apoc. xvii. 8.

one nor the other had ever seen the King in any such case as He describes, or come to His relief. Then the Lord explains that He counts services which were rendered to His brethren as rendered to Himself, and that by the presence or absence of such acts of devotion to Him, in the persons of His members all men, even those who are outside the fold of the Church, are to be judged.

Nothing is more noticeable in all our Lord's anticipations of the Judgement than His appeal to practical tests of human character. Professions go for nothing; high office, great opportunities go for nothing; conduct is everything. But the particular method applied here is remarkable in the last degree; there is nothing like it in other pictures of the Judgement. In the first place our Lord makes conduct towards Himself the supreme test. This is not altogether new, for even in Galilee He had insisted that to confess Him before men was to be confessed before the Angels of God, and to deny Him was to be denied; that every one who forsook father or mother, home, or children, or lands for His sake and the Gospel's, would find a sure reward. This was to place the highest value on personal devotion to Himself; and it is evident that He lays a similar emphasis here. But these Gentile nations, what opportunities could they have had of rendering such acts of service, even if they knew His name, which to many among them

would have been unknown? Hence their unfeigned surprise when He credits them with either devotion or neglect. He explains that He takes services rendered to His brethren as rendered to Himself, and neglect of His brethren as neglect of Himself.

But who are His brethren? In Mc. iii. 35 He says, *Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother.* And this is probably His meaning here, or at least His first meaning. But there is another which is possible; for He is the Son of Man, the Head of the race; and as such He may well account every man His brother, and we may see Christ, the Image of God, in every one who bears the human form. And so it may be that our Lord recognizes love to Himself not only in the love of the brethren, properly so called, the φιλαδελφία of the Epistles, but in all genuine philanthropy, in all real enthusiasm for humanity. And thus this Parable of the Judgement opens a door to the hope that among non-Christians, heathens before and after Christ, Moslems, even among the many who, having known Christianity from childhood, have not been able to convince themselves of its truth, there may be those whom the Lord will set on His right hand and welcome to the Kingdom; while, on the other hand, there must be many who, tried by their conduct to their fellow-men, will utterly fail to find a place there. And after all it is love, unselfish, self-sacrificing love, and not

creed which draws the real dividing line between sheep and goats, between man and man, though only Christ can infallibly discover it. One is reminded of St. James' declaration, *Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*[1] If a heathen did this, he did it by the Spirit of Christ, and will be acknowledged by the Christ at His coming. At the same time, Christ does not teach that a mere profession of charitable gifts, or the rôle of a public benefactor, or even the gratification of a natural kindliness of disposition, is an equivalent for faith and holiness of life. That is a modern heresy which cannot be too strongly opposed. It is only a genuine love of the brethren, a real spirit of self-sacrifice, the true interest and sympathy in the needs and sorrows of men, that proclaims a man vitally in harmony with the mind of Christ, and therefore one of those for whom the Kingdom has been *prepared from the foundation of the world.*

A few words as to the last sentence of the chapter. *These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous* (*shall go*) *into eternal life.* That is, the general tenor of their lives in this world, as they are seen in the light of a perfect love, will decide their

[1] Jac. i. 27. *θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστιν, ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανοὺς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου.*

condition in the next. Another aeon is to follow the consummation of this one, and that new aeon can only be one of painful discipline to those who have not learnt the lessons of the present life: discipline, I say, in corrective rather than retributive punishment, for the word used is discipline, chastisement, κόλασις, and not retribution, τιμωρία.[1] Those, on the other hand, who have learnt to love and to serve enter into life, for they have been prepared for it here. Both 'discipline' and 'life' are 'aeonian' (κόλασις, ζωή, αἰώνιος); they belong not to our present conditions of existence, but to others which are as yet quite unknown to us; we have no right at all to import into the word 'aeonian' our conceptions of time; life in the next 'aeon,' discipline there, is not measured by days or weeks or months or years. Hence 'everlasting' and even 'eternal,' as usually understood, impart an element of duration into future rewards and punishments which is alien from the New Testament conception. Both are eternal in the sense that they belong to the next aeon, to which no limit is fixed in Scripture, and where, indeed, time is not as we measure it.

[1] κόλασις is properly corrective and not retributive punishment, as Aristotle (Rhet. A. 10. § 17) says expressly: ἡ μὲν γὰρ κόλασις τοῦ πάσχοντος ἕνεκά ἐστιν, ἡ δὲ τιμωρία τοῦ ποιοῦντος, chastisement is for the sake of, for the welfare of, him who suffers it: but retribution, of him that inflicts it.

It is the mysterious absence of all the conditions we know which gives that coming age its vast solemnity, and we only lower the appeal it makes to human hopes and fears, if we bring into it the idea of endless time. It is enough that for those who live loveless lives the next age has only κόλασις, chastisement, correction, sharp discipline; whereas for those who love Christ and their brethren for His sake, it has only life, the full joyous use of the matured powers of conscious being. In that kingdom of life and light *they will reign*, as St. John says in the Apocalypse (xxii. 5), *for ages of ages* (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). For as age succeeds to age in that boundless future, there is no prospect of their falling away from God; there is nothing that can rob them of the life of love; for evil has been finally shut out of the Kingdom of God, and their union with God through Christ in His Holy Spirit is at length complete.

The Distribution of the Parables among the Synoptic Gospels.

I have now led you through the Parables of the Kingdom, *i.e.* those which are expressly said to be such, or which, from their close connexion or affinity with parables that are so described, may properly be classed with them. We have considered eighteen such parables, falling naturally into two groups:

(1) the seven parables of St. Matthew xiii., together with the kindred parables of St. Mark iv. 26-29, all of which seem to belong to our Lord's ministry in Galilee; and (2) ten parables, spoken, as it seems, either on the way to Jerusalem or in Jerusalem itself, during the latter months or at the very end of the Ministry, most of them in fact on the eve of the Passion.

Before passing on, the distribution of these parables among the Synoptic Gospels demands notice. Twelve of the eighteen are peculiar to St. Matthew, and three more are shared by St. Matthew with one or both of the other Synoptists. Only two are peculiar to St Luke, only one to St Mark. St. Matthew, then, is the chief contributor to our stock of Parables of the Kingdom. St. Mark has but three parables of any kind; St. Luke is rich in parables, but they are nearly all of another type. St. Matthew's parables, on the other hand, are of this class without exception. Is there any explanation of this circumstance?

In the first place, it seems clear that we owe the preservation of the parables generally not to the Marcan or Petrine tradition, but to the collection of discourses usually known as the Logia, *i.e.* an Aramaic collection of Sayings of our Lord, perhaps identical with that ascribed by Papias to the Apostle Matthew, but in any case made by some member or members

of the early Palestinian Church, from which both our first and third Gospels drew material for their accounts of the teaching of our Lord. But why did the editor of our first Gospel generally fix upon parables which are expressly said to be similitudes of the Kingdom of Heaven? Again the answer is not far to seek. For our first Evangelist, whoever he may have been, was plainly saturated with the conception of a Messianic Kingdom. Jesus Christ is for him above all things the Son of David, the scion of the royal house of Judah. At His birth magi come from the East, asking *Where is he that is born king of the Jews?* It is the aim of his whole Gospel to shew that, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, Jesus was the promised King, and to present all His teaching in such a way as to make it converge upon the idea of a Divine Kingdom, and centre in it. Yet the editor of the first Gospel holds no brief for Jewish predominance; his conception of the Messianic Kingdom is eminently spiritual and world-wide. If the Gospel begins with the genealogy which endeavours to shew our Lord to have been the lineal descendant of all the Jewish kings, it ends with the great commission *Go, make disciples of all the nations.* It is the *kingdom of heaven* that our St. Matthew preaches: a kingdom which is not of this world, a new spiritual order which has for its end the setting up of the reign of God over the

hearts of men. Of this idea our first Evangelist is full, and he found parables in the Logia which enforced and illustrated it; and he pressed into the service of his Gospel all he found. We are grateful to him for it, as we are grateful to St. Luke for having saved for us those parables of the grace of God which are characteristic of the third Gospel. Each of the Synoptic Gospels has its special contribution to make to the fulness of Christian thought, and the special contribution made by the Gospel called after St. Matthew is that it exhibits the Christ in His royal character; it is pre-eminently the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. The conception of a Divine Kingdom is, it is true, common to all the Gospels, and no other note is struck so often by the Synoptists, but it is most frequent in St. Matthew: while the expression occurs fourteen times in St. Mark and thirty-three times in St. Luke, St. Matthew uses either the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven thirty-seven times in all, and with rare exceptions he prefers the expression the Kingdom of Heaven. He seems to have felt that he was entrusted with the task of correcting the impression that the Messianic Kingdom was political or racial, while at the same time he laid emphasis on the fact that Jesus had indeed come to fulfil the highest hopes of the prophets of Israel by setting up a Divine Kingdom over all the world.

III

THE TEACHING OF THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

I WISH now to gather together what these parables have taught us about the Kingdom of Heaven as our Lord conceived it. We shall get by this means a compact and, I hope, serviceable body of Christian teaching, straight from the mind and lips of Christ Himself. For if any sayings attributed to Christ are certainly and unmistakably His, such surely are these parables in all their main features; they bear the mark of the Master's mind and cannot by any possibility be placed to the account of the Evangelists or of the sources they used. In the parables, we hear, without any doubt, the very voice of Jesus Christ, teaching *the mysteries of the Kingdom*[1] to those who have ears to hear.

The Kingdom of Heaven or *of God.*

And to begin, I must repeat in some way what I have said earlier about the Kingdom of Heaven or of God. The phrase did not originate with our

[1] Mt. xiii. 11.

Lord;[1] the corresponding Aramaic phrase is common in the later Jewish writings, and the Old Testament speaks freely of a Kingdom of God as in Pss. ciii. 19; cxlv. 11; Dan. ii. 44; iv. 3, 17. The sense is not a territory governed by God, but God's sovereignty, His rule or reign, whether over Israel, as the theocratic people, or over nature and the world by His inherent right. The later Jews realized this latter sense, and expected a time to come when the reign of God would extend to all the nations of the world. All nations, it was held, would one day submit to the Divine power. But it was far from their desire to concede to the Gentile nations the privileges of the theocracy. The Jew was still to retain his place in the Divine favour and the Gentile was either to submit or be subdued.

Our Lord, then, found this view of the Divine Sovereignty everywhere accepted by His Jewish contemporaries, and He adopted the phrase and made it the symbol of a conception which was all His own. In the first place, it became in His teaching a spiritual as opposed to an earthly dominion. To the Jew the theocracy meant national prosperity, victory over the enemies of Israel, liberation from alien control, predominance among the nations. Here is an account of the Messianic Kingdom from the Psalms of Solomon, a Pharisaic book written about half a century before the birth of our Lord:

[1] See above pp. 5, 6.

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their King, the son of David . . . that He may reign over Israel Thy servant; and gird Him with strength that He may break in pieces them that rule unjustly. Purge Jerusalem from the heathen that trample her down to destroy her . . . He shall destroy the ungodly nations with the word of His mouth, and He shall gather together a holy people, and shall judge the tribes of the people that hath been sanctified by the Lord His God . . . and the sojourner and the stranger (πάροικος καὶ ἀλλογενής) *shall dwell with them no more. He shall judge the nations and the people with the wisdom of His righteousness; and He shall possess the nations of the heathen to serve Him beneath His yoke, . . . and He shall purge Jerusalem and make it holy, even as it was in the days of old, so that the nations may come from the ends of the earth to see His glory.*[1]

That was, in its most spiritual form, the idea which the Pharisees had formed of the Divine Reign on earth; and such was the mission which the people, taught by them, expected the Messiah to fulfil. But it was not the mission upon which our Lord had come; and while accepting the current term, which was good in itself, He set about the task of giving it a new content; He made it the business of His Ministry to teach the true meaning of the Kingdom of God.

And, first, our Lord at once raised the conception

[1] Psalms of Solomon, xvii. 23-34.

of the Divine Kingdom or Sovereignty out of the political sphere into the spiritual and ideal. He spoke of it commonly, according to St. Matthew, and probably also according to the Logia which lie behind St. Matthew's parables, as *the Kingdom of Heaven* rather than *the Kingdom of God*. Now ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν is no doubt equivalent to ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, for the later Jews used *the heavens* for the Holy Name; thus in Daniel *the heavens do rule* means *God rules*,[1] and the Mishnah uses *the Name of the Heavens*, *the fear of the Heavens* for *the Name*, *the fear of God*. But while ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ might be understood in a political sense, of non-subjection to Rome, ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν naturally turns attention to the supra-mundane character of the Kingdom of God, that it belongs to a higher order, is wholly independent of earthly and transitory politics; in fact it asserts positively just what Christ stated negatively when He said to Pilate *My Kingdom is not of this world*; not *of this world*, because *of Heaven*, belonging to the unseen, eternal order of things.[2]

I am disposed to think that in St. Matthew's *Kingdom of the Heavens* we have the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic expression which our Lord usually employed when He spoke of the Kingdom of God; He called it מַלְכוּתָא דִשְׁמַיָּא, 'the Reign,' 'the Sovereignty of the Heavens,' with the express purpose

[1] Dan. iv. 26. [2] Jo. xviii. 36.

of calling attention to the spiritual, non-political, non-mundane character of that which He came to preach.

And in the earlier parables, those of the Galilean ministry, we find that stress is uniformly laid upon this aspect of the Kingdom. The Lord seems, in all these parables, purposely to avoid any mention of royal state or splendour, even of the life of the upper classes of society, or of courts and capitals. *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed*, or to *a grain of mustard seed*, or to *leaven which a woman took*, or to the labourer finding treasure, or the pearl merchant trading on the highway, or a fisherman casting a net into the sea. All these similitudes are taken from the daily life of the Galilean, and that is, no doubt, one reason why they are used. But there is another; they all represent the Kingdom of Heaven as something quite removed from earthly greatness and power; as analogous not to the magnificence of kings, but to the simple and yet really grander processes of nature and life, as a hidden power working invisibly and with no outward show of strength, and yet working surely to a certain end. Five of these eight parables are borrowed from the vegetable kingdom; they shew the immanent power of God at work in the processes of vegetable growth, where man has hardly any part to play beyond that of sowing and reaping: and they teach

us to expect a similar process in the spiritual world, in the inner man, in the evolution of human thought and life, a process as silent, as apparently insignificant, as marvellous, and as sure.

For, secondly, while Christ thus emphasizes the spiritual character of the Divine Sovereignty, He insists upon its living power and certain triumph. Even in these earlier parables this is clearly seen. The mustard seed becomes a tree ; the leaven hidden in the meal works on till the whole is leavened ; the net gathers of every kind. The Kingdom is no less sure to prevail because it works invisibly, without outward pomp or show of power. In the later parables this factor becomes predominant. Having in His earlier teaching fully established the spirituality of the Divine Reign, the Lord is free to dwell upon the greatness of its operations. Its Head is now represented as a great landowner or a king ; He issues His invitations to high and low ; He dispenses His wealth in vast sums to His servants ; He can wipe out a debt of millions, and be no poorer ; He has armies at His command, which can destroy those who murder His representatives, and burn their cities. The power is invisible, it works silently and unseen, but it works effectively ; the King of the heavenly kingdom can reward and can punish : can enforce His will at pleasure ; and the latest parables suggest that His sphere of influence is wider than that of any

earthly empire, extending to all the nations of the world, whom He can summon before Him and control and order as He thinks fit.

And thirdly, the Kingdom of Heaven, in all its essential powers, is actually at work in this present time. It was working in Galilee, when Christ sowed the word of the Kingdom there ; it has been working, as many of the parables clearly shew, from that time to our own. Its operations are represented by the sowing and growing of the early agricultural parables ; by the vineyard and the labourers, the sons, the servants, in the later ones. These operations are represented as going on in the world, in the Church, but also as having for their seat the individual human spirit. All that in the Epistles of St. Paul is connected with the work of the Holy Spirit, is in the parables assigned to the Kingdom of God. All the external work of the Church, her parochial and diocesan organizations, her missionary enterprise, her administration of Word and Sacraments, is also included. The Kingdom of Heaven as represented in the Parables of the Kingdom is to be identified not with the Church on the one hand, nor with individual religion on the other ; rather it is the working of the Divine power, the fulfilment of the Divine will, in both. In the Lord's Prayer Christ has taught us to pray, *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,*—*ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου.*

That is a much larger and more inclusive prayer than a petition for the spread of the Church or of the Gospel or of the Christian life in individuals would be. It embraces all this, but it embraces also the purpose of it all, *i.e.* the fulfilment of the Will of God. In some ancient authorities[1] instead of *Thy kingdom come* we find a prayer for the Holy Spirit: *May thy Holy Spirit come upon us and purify us*—ἐλθέτω τὸ πνεῦμά σου τὸ ἅγιον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ καθαρισάτω ἡμᾶς. This is indeed a good prayer, but it falls short of the comprehensiveness of that which Christ taught His disciples. The Holy Spirit comes to establish us in the reign of God; *The kingdom of God*, as St. Paul says, *is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*[2] But it is more than this; it is the whole process of the gradual subjection of all things in heaven and earth to the Will of God, of which our sanctification by the Spirit is but a part. This immense work, the reconciliation of all things to God in Christ and by the Spirit, is the work of this age, reaching from the first coming of our Lord to the second; and it is for the accomplishment of it that we pray day by day *Thy kingdom come*, and it is of this that the Parables of the Kingdom speak.

Fourthly, the Parables of the Kingdom treat quite as clearly of the future as of the present. Though only two or three parables, spoken at the end of the

[1] Lc. xi. 2. [2] Rom. xiv. 17.

Ministry, are purely eschatological, and refer to the future only, there is more or less of eschatology in nearly all. All the parables of sowing look forward more or less distinctly to a harvest which has not yet come. The interest of the Parable of the Draw-net is centred in the drawing in and examination of the haul of fishes. The Parables of the Great Supper and the Marriage Feast, of the Labourers and the Husbandmen, of the Pounds and the Talents, all keep the end well in view. It is quite possible to exaggerate the eschatological element in the parables, and just now it is the fashion to do so. I shall come to this point in due course; but I ask you now to note only that the Parables of the Kingdom recognize quite distinctly that the present work of the Kingdom of God is leading to a very definite end, that the existing order of things has a limit, and that towards that limit every day is carrying us forward, though no man, not even the great Son of Man, knows when it will be reached.

These then are the four great facts about the Kingdom of Heaven which these parables teach us. It is spiritual, invisible, supra-mundane, wholly independent of human governments and politics. It is nevertheless a power of immense strength and unlimited activity, able to subdue all things to itself, although it works in silence and unseen. Again, it is a power which is actually at work around us and within us, in the heart, in the Church, in the world.

And, lastly, all its present work is leading up to a single end, the attainment of an order of things in which the Will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Only Son, Bridegroom, and King.

In the next place, we proceed to learn what answer these parables give to the question, Who are they who work out the great end?

The parables rarely speak of the Supreme King of the heavenly kingdom. They make no attempt to depict, in apocalyptic fashion, the majesty of the Heavenly King; nothing, for instance, like the description of the Court of Heaven in Apoc. iv. If God is represented in the parables at all, it is under an earthly similitude consistent with the story of the parable: He is an *ἄνθρωπος βασιλεύς*, a man that is a King, or an householder, *οἰκοδεσπότης*. But usually He does not appear, and there is no mention of His presence or activity; the parables limit themselves to the work of the Kingdom on earth, making no effort to set forth the Invisible Power that is behind, or the heavenly order from which the Sovereignty emanates. Their subject is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and they tell only of earthly persons and things by which and in the midst of which it is at work.

Jesus Christ Himself.

On the other hand Christ frequently appears in His own parables. He is the Sower and Reaper in the first three of the first group; He is the Bridegroom in the Parable of the Ten Virgins; He is the King in the Judgement scene of St. Matthew xxv.

Particularly as the King's Son, and the only and Beloved Son.

It is in the second group of parables that Jesus speaks of Himself more distinctly. He is the King's Son in the Marriage Feast, and the Only and Beloved Son and Heir in the Parable of the Husbandmen (Mt. xxi.). Since the King in the one parable, and the Owner of the Vineyard in the other, both clearly represent God the Father, it is clear that our Lord in these parables put forth a deliberate claim to be, in a unique sense, the Son of God. *He had yet one, a beloved Son—ἔτι ἕνα εἶχεν υἱὸν ἀγαπητόν.* So runs the parable of the Husbandmen in St. Mark.[1] Beloved Son, *υἱὸς ἀγαπητός*, is practically equivalent to 'Only begotten Son,' *υἱὸς μονογενής*: He is a Son upon whom the Father looks with a love which is unique, because He has none other. Such a Son Jesus had been declared to be at the Baptism,[2] and

[1] xii. 6. [2] Mc. i. 11; Mt. iii. 17; Lc. iii. 22.

He now makes His claim public, adding that He is the Father's Heir, in a sense as peculiar to Himself as that in which He is Son of God—the only Heir because the Only Son. It is true that St. Paul says of himself and all other Christians: *We are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,*[1] *συγκληρονόμοι δὲ χριστοῦ*; but in strictness our Lord is the Only Son and the only Heir, as the parable represents Him to be. No one else could say *All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine*;[2] of no one else could it have been said, *All things have been created through him and unto him*[3] (*δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτόν*). I cannot see that this claim made by our Lord in the Synoptic parables falls short in any way of the claims that are made on His behalf in the Fourth Gospel, or by St. Paul in the Epistles to the Philippians, Ephesians, and Colossians. It is indeed said that *Son of God*, and even *the Beloved* and *Only Son, the Heir*, are merely Messianic titles, and that by assuming them our Lord claimed only to be the promised Messiah. That may be so; it may be that when Caiaphas asked, *Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*[4] he really meant no more by the second title than by the first. But *Son of God* is not a frequent name for the Messiah in Jewish writings, though it was suggested by the Second Psalm; and it is perhaps more likely that the High Priest referred to

[1] Rom. viii. 17. [2] Jo. xvi. 15. [3] Col. i. 16. [4] Mc. xiv. 61.

our Lord's personal claim to be the Son of God than to the Divine Sonship of the Messiah. But be that as it may, it is clear that to Jesus Himself the name *Son of God* meant very much more than a mere title of office. We need not go to the Fourth Gospel to discover this: it appears from many of His sayings in the Synoptists, and even from the Parables. For what else is the meaning of the immense distance which He puts between Himself and all other messengers of God? They, the Prophets of the Old Testament, were but *servants*, *slaves*, δοῦλοι, the absolute property of the Eternal Father; He alone was *Son* and *Heir*. All men are in a sense God's sons; Israel was His son by a special adoption; but compared with Jesus Christ even the prophets of Israel were but slaves. Does it not follow that He was Son not by adoption, as they, but as the Church afterwards expressed it, by generation, by the possession of a Divine life; that He was God of God, θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ, the pre-existent, co-essential Son?

As the King.

Once only in these parables our Lord calls Himself *the King*. In the final picture of the Judgement of the world we read, *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.*[1] There can

[1] Mt. xxv. 34.

be no question but that it is the *King's Son* of the Marriage Feast who thus speaks as *the King*. And the reason is that He is speaking there of a future time when He will have come into His inheritance. He is going, we are told in the parable of the Pounds, *to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return*; and in this Parable of the Judgement, He has returned, and the Kingdom is His. Moreover, when seated on the judgement-throne He represents the Father, who has given all judgement to Him, *that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*.[1] And yet in this future reign of Jesus Christ, *the Son* and *Heir* of God, there is no eclipse of the supreme glory of the Eternal Father. On the contrary the Kingdom of Christ as soon as it is fully realized at His coming will be merged, as St. Paul teaches us, in the Kingdom of God; it is for this end that the Son is glorified, that the Father may be glorified in Him; and so *When all things have been subjected* to Christ, *then shall the Son also himself be subjected* to the Father, *that God may be all in all*.[2] That consummation indeed lies beyond the scope of the parables, but it should be borne in mind. The Kingdom of Heaven is the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Christ in which we live and which will be perfected at the Parousia, in other words, the Christian dispensation with its ordinances and institutions, is temporary

[1] Jo. v. 22 f. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 28.

and preparatory, to be merged at last and disappear in that final *restoration of all things* which is the goal of creation.

As the Bridegroom.

One other title of our Lord in these parables requires special notice. He is *the Bridegroom.* It is remarkable that this title was not only claimed by our Lord quite early in His ministry, but was even given to Him by the Forerunner. It is based on the Old Testament; but there is this remarkable difference between the Old Testament use of the figure and its use by the Baptist and by our Lord, that in the Old Testament the Bridegroom is the God of Israel in His covenant relation with Israel His people,[1] whereas in the Gospels, and in the New Testament generally, the Bridegroom is quite persistently identified with Jesus Christ. This holds true of certain other Old Testament titles of God. For example, while the Psalmist says plainly JAHWE *is my shepherd,*[2] our Lord says with no less distinctness *I am the good shepherd.*[3] The Christ, in other words, assumes the relations which in the Old Testament belong to JAHWE, the God of Israel. Thus our Lord's

[1] Cf. *e.g.* Hosea ii. 19: *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*; Is. liv. 5: *Thy Maker is thy husband*; *the* LORD *of hosts is his name.*

[2] Ps. xxiii. 1. [3] Jo. x. 11.

claim to be *the Bridegroom*, is not less amazing than His claim to be *the Only Son*, and it would be simply intolerable on any merely humanitarian view of His Person.

But if He is the Bridegroom, who is the Bride? Doubtless in the mind of John the Baptist and of the first disciples of Christ, the Bride was still Israel; Jesus had come to espouse the ancient people of God, and raise them to the throne from which they had been deposed by their enemies. But in the thoughts of Jesus, probably from the first, certainly as His ministry advanced, a new Israel took the place of the old, an Israel composed of men of all nations and languages who should believe on Him and keep His commandments. He calls this new people of God His Congregation as contrasted with the congregation of the ancient Israel: *I will build*, He says, *my ecclesia*.[1] Our English word 'Church,' good and suggestive as it is, obscures His meaning here, for it loses sight of the reference to the Old Testament which lies in the Greek word ἐκκλησία. For ἐκκλησία, as Dr. Hort has shewn in *The Christian Ecclesia*,[2] is in the Greek Old Testament from Deuteronomy onwards the usual rendering of the Hebrew קָהָל, *i.e.* the gathering or congregation of the people of Israel. Now when Christ speaks of *My Ecclesia*, *My Congregation*, He clearly distinguishes between the old Israel

[1] Mt. xvi. 18. [2] pp. 4-7.

and a new Israel which is His, while setting forth the continuity of the new with the old by the very choice of a word which had in the Greek Bible represented the old. What Christ's Israel, Christ's Congregation or Church was to be, we learn as His teaching advances: before the Passion He speaks of *this Gospel of the Kingdom* being *preached for a testimony unto all the nations*:[1] after the Resurrection He sends His disciples to make disciples all over the world. And the same thing is taught in the Parables of the Great Supper and the Marriage of the King's Son, where the servants are sent into the highways and hedges of the open country and bidden to call as many as they could find to the wedding; and the wedding is presently furnished with guests. Here we have quite plainly the call of the Gentiles and the formation of a Catholic or universal Church, no longer limited to Israel. In these parables indeed the bidden are the guests of the Bridegroom and not the Bride; the Bride herself does not appear in the Parables of the Kingdom, if we except the doubtful reading in St. Matthew xxv. 1; and later in the New Testament, where she is mentioned, it is with reference to the Second Coming of the Lord. For the Bride is the spiritual invisible Church which is being made ready for the Parousia: not the Church in her present outward organization, but the sum of those within her

[1] Mt. xxiv. 14.

who are preparing themselves for the Lord's coming, and are being gathered generation after generation into His Presence. When He comes, all these will come with Him, and these, with the addition of all like souls that are still on earth, will be the acknowledged Spouse of Christ.

The Present Visible Church.

But does not the present visible Church, with its order and its ministries, find a place in the Parables of the Kingdom? Certainly, and in not a few of them. The Catholic Church is to be seen in the world-wide field where wheat and tares grow together to the harvest; in the net thrown into the sea of life which encloses a great multitude of fishes, good and bad; in the supper-chamber into which men are called; in the Vineyard in which they labour. Its work in the world is symbolized by the sowing of the seed, the leavening of the lump, the casting of the net, the calling of the guests, the hiring of the labourers, the doing business with the pounds or the talents, the watching of the virgins. The expansion of the Church and its growing importance as a factor in the history of the world is seen quite plainly in the Parable of the Mustard seed; the rapid growth of unspiritual and evil men within the Church and their intermingling with good and spiritual Christians,

a necessary consequence of the Church's progress in the world, is quite obviously described in the Parable of the Tares, the darnel among the wheat. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church and her endowment with spiritual gifts is as evidently depicted in the Talents; while the more secret and personal work of the Spirit is foreshadowed in the silent growth of the seed, in the spreading of the leaven through the lump, in the oil in the vessel ready to feed the lighted torch of the wise virgin soul.

The Individual Life in Christ.

And not the Church only but the individual life in Christ is here in its many varieties. The man who comes upon the treasure without seeking it, the man who, while seeking for goodly pearls, finds one of great price, are complementary types of Christian character, both of which are needful to the completeness of the Body of Christ. In the Parable of the Sower we see the various measures of fruitfulness which distinguish individual lives, while the Pounds shew how the same gifts may be turned to more or less advantage, according to individual character. It is evident that our Lord contemplated no monotonous uniformity in His Church, but the free play of personal life; and yet how in the midst of much diversity there are certain features which are common

to all genuine disciples, and mark them as His; there are in all the same inner and unseen growth and outward manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit; there are in all the sense of Divine forgiveness and the exercise of the spirit of forgiveness towards fellow-servants; there are in all, in more or less degree, the two aspects of Christian conduct which are symbolized by the watching of the Virgins and the doing business with the Pounds or Talents—a contemplative, ascetic, side of the religious experience, and a side which is occupied by the active work of each man's calling.

Human Responsibility.

And there is another important and far-reaching subject in connexion with the individual life upon which the Parables of the Kingdom have much to tell us. It is the question of human responsibility. You might suppose that the idea of a Kingdom or Sovereignty of God would suggest a rigid determinism, a one-sided, unbalanced representation of the Divine predestination of men, as if it excluded personal freedom, and left them the subjects of an arbitrary exercise of the Supreme Will. But while the Parables of the Kingdom magnify the power and the mercy of the Heavenly King, they represent with every variety of imagery the responsibility of man, and the freedom of his will to accept or reject the Divine

offer. The growth and produce of the wheat-grain depend not only on the inherent vitality of the seed, but also on the nature of the soil that receives it. Indeed, in St. Mark's singular parable, the soil is said to bear *of its own accord*, αὐτομάτη, as if to shew how much depends upon it; and the soil, you will remember, represents the human heart, mind, and emotions, and above all, the will. And to take another class of parables, in the case of him who accidentally finds the hidden treasure, as well as in that of him who deliberately seeks goodly pearls, a great effort of the will is needed in order to obtain possession of that which has been found; each man has to make a supreme sacrifice, or he gains nothing by his discovery. In the Great Supper and the Marriage Feast, the freedom of the will is clearly seen; the King spreads the feast and invites the guests, but the guests can refuse or accept as they please, and it is they who really determine their own destiny. It is so through all these later parables down to the end. The goats are not condemned because they are goats, or the sheep approved because they are sheep, but each is approved or condemned because he has done or left undone duties to which he was clearly called. Everywhere we are met by the doctrine of human responsibility; within the Kingdom and without it there is the same law that men make their own future. And so far from lessen-

ing or destroying responsibility the Sovereign Grace of God increases it, multiplies it many times; for every act of Divine forgiveness, every gift of Divine Grace, lays upon men a fresh duty, a fresh call to service. We can see all this in the parables, and it does not present to our minds the same hopeless puzzle which the study of predestination and freewill in the abstract presents. These two great factors in human life are seen in the parables working quite harmoniously together: we recognize, but we are not perplexed by the fact that much good seed is wasted through falling on the rock or among thorns; or by the fact that men can and do reject or misuse God's best earthly gifts, or that some men make so much more out of their advantages than others do, or that thoughtlessness or sluggishness bring punishments that seem to be altogether out of proportion to the magnitude of the offence. The parables remind us that such things are going on, as a matter of fact, in our outward earthly life and yet men are practically free. It is so, our Lord says, in the spiritual life; the Sovereignty of God, the Divine Kingdom, does not so control the human will as to deprive it of its proper function, its great responsibility, of deciding for itself. Into the metaphysical problem presented by this state of things Christ does not enter; He did not come, He was not sent to solve problems. But He recognizes the facts and

bids us recognize them ; just as we cannot act upon necessitarian principles in the things of common life, so we cannot act upon them in the things of the spirit ; or if we do so in either case, we must expect disaster. In things spiritual as in things temporal we must act as if all depended upon ourselves, although we know that if it did, we should certainly be undone. This is the practical teaching of the Parables of the Kingdom, and it is teaching to which attention can hardly be called too often.

The Problem of Evil and of *a Personal Power of Evil.*

There is another grave problem on which the Parables have something to say : the problem of Evil. But they approach it only on the practical side and only in its relation to the Kingdom of God. The darnel would not have received any notice, had it not appeared among the wheat. What was it doing there ? How came it there ? The puzzle was too great for the servants, but the Master knew, and His answer is quite explicit. It had not come there by accident, nor was it there because its seeds were in the soil, but it had been sown by the direct and deliberate act of a malicious enemy : ἐχθρὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῦτο ἐποίησεν, *An enemy hath done this.* The same crime, it seems, has been committed within a generation or two in India, and nearer home, in Ireland.

The farmer's enemy came by night, just after the rice or the corn had been sown, and while the soil was still receptive; he scattered the seeds of some noxious weed over the surface of the rice field or the furrows. This is what has been done, the Lord says, in God's field by God's enemy, and in the interpretation the name of the enemy is given: *The enemy that sowed them* (the tares) *is the Devil.* And whether or not the interpretation is regarded as Christ's own, this is doubtless Christ's meaning; for throughout His teaching a personal Devil or Satan is assumed to be working in opposition to God. Look at such utterances as *I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority . . . over all the power of the enemy* (τοῦ ἐχθροῦ);[1] *the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.*[2] *Behold, Satan asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat.*[3] The last petition of the Lord's Prayer should probably be translated, *Deliver us from the Evil One.*

So many Christians now deny that there is any personal Devil that it is worth while to labour this point a little. First as to the names: *devil* is of course merely διάβολος, which means one who διαβάλλει, one who accuses, maligns; *Satan*, the Hebrew שָׂטָן Aramaic סָטָנָא, Greek (N.T.) σατανᾶς, is merely an adversary, or, as the parable translates it, ἐχθρός, an enemy. But the Satan, ὁ σατανᾶς, the Devil, singles

[1] Lc. x. 18, 19. [2] Mt. xxv. 41. [3] Lc. xxii. 31.

out a particular person who is pre-eminently the Adversary, the Accuser; the person who, as St. John says,[1] is commonly called *Devil* and *the Satan* (*ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ Ὁ Σατανᾶς*). This person is mentioned only in the later post-exilic books of the Old Testament, and by name only in three passages, Zechariah iii., Job i., and 1 Chronicles xxi.; and the natural inference is that this conception of *the Satan* or personal adversary of God and men—at least under this name—was a somewhat late importation into Jewish theology, possibly as some say of Babylonian or Persian origin. Into that question I need not now go; in any case it was in our Lord's time an article of common belief among the Jews, and was accepted, as it seems, by our Lord in His teaching. The question is whether, this being so, it is binding on Christians, or rather whether it is to be taken as expressing a great and tremendous fact in the spiritual world.

Now it is clear, I think, that our Lord *did* accept current terms, and even current beliefs, so far as it was possible to do this consistently with essential truth. It is characteristic of His teaching to start with what people believed, and to use their own expressions and terms so far as He could. You see this in His use of the word *Gehenna*, and *Paradise*, and *Abraham's Bosom*, and perhaps also in much of what

[1] Apoc. xii. 9.

He says about demons; for instance, it seems evident that the boy from whom He cast out a demon (Mc. ix.) was subject to what we should now call epilepsy; and that when Jesus rebuked the deaf and dumb spirit, He used popular language just as He did when He rebuked the raging winds and sea, as if they had been living things. But His constant acceptance of the principle that a personal evil power presides over all that antagonism to the good will of God which we can plainly see at work is, as it seems to me, far too grave a matter to be treated as a mere concession to popular belief. Even in the case of possession it may be suspected that there is very much more of truth in the current belief than many moderns suppose. But whatever may be thought of the connexion of alien will-power with certain diseases such as epilepsy, there is nothing in science which can disprove the existence of a central personal force of evil such as the New Testament and the teaching of our Lord Himself presuppose. And though I am not prepared to assert that the existence of a personal Devil is an article of the Christian faith, to decry which is heresy in the ecclesiastical sense, I am bound to say that to deny the existence of a personal Devil seems to introduce a grave element of uncertainty into the teaching of Christ and of the Apostles; for of what can we feel sure if on this very fundamental question that teaching is not to be taken seriously?

Our Lord and the Apostles, then, certainly taught, and that is sufficient reason why we should hesitate to refrain from teaching, the existence of a personal Power of Evil, *the Evil One*, *ὁ πονηρός*, the Enemy, *ὁ ἐχθρός*, and this teaching is enshrined in the Parables of the Kingdom. The Enemy sows tares among the wheat. Consider what this means: that like Christ and His servants he sows seed, but seed which is not good, and that he sows this seed just where Christ has sown the good. *Seed* is religious teaching possessing vitality and producing life; and as *the Good Seed* is *the Word of God*, so the seed which the Devil sows is the Devil's word; it is teaching which finds its way into men's hearts and produces fruits which are noxious, destructive to spiritual life, prejudicial to the interests of the Kingdom of God. It is then by false teaching that the Devil works; he circulates within the field where God's truth has been sown, beliefs, opinions, ideals, which are its opposite; he leaves them to bear fruit, and the result is seen in lives which are essentially opposed to the life of Christ. I am not speaking only or even chiefly of what are called 'heresies'; though all false teaching about the faith, about (*e.g.*) the Person of Christ, or the Work of Christ, is certain to bring, so far as it takes root and grows, a corresponding falling off in Christian life. But I refer chiefly to the false standards of life, the ideals which are, at bottom,

not Christ's but the world's, the misrepresentations of Christian belief and Christian practice which are so common among people who ought to know better. If we believe Christ, these opinions and views of life which are so widely disseminated in Christian lands are all in fact to be traced to that terrible will-power which has set itself to oppose God and Christ. These apparently harmless little seeds which are scattered in conversation, in periodical literature, in books otherwise praiseworthy, may ultimately be traced to the Devil, as all seeds of truth and good living are to be traced to Christ. Outside the Church the Enemy does as he wills ; within the Church in Christian lands in good society he comes by night, not openly but quite as truly, and sows his seeds. No one detects the mischief that is being done till the blade and the fruit appear ; such fruit as an unhealthy state of public opinion, the prevalence of beliefs and practices which are not according to Christ, the neglect of Christian ordinances and duties, an open antagonism to the revealed will of God.

Why the Enemy is permitted to do this, how this great Will came to set itself into opposition to the Will of the Creator, the Lord does not say. It is enough for us to know that the Enemy's hand is in all sowing of evil seed. It is Devil's work to disseminate, by word of mouth or in print, any ideas which do not make for righteousness, which make

against faith and spiritual life. If such seeds are dropt into your mind by what you read or hear, destroy or eradicate them, if you can; but at least do not communicate them to another soul. To have the Devil's seed sown in you, is a misfortune; to retain it and let it grow, is a sin; to scatter it abroad, is diabolical. That is the essence of our Lord's teaching about evil in the Church.

The Final Issues of Evil.

I have a yet graver subject to deal with: the final issues of evil, as they are depicted in these parables.

Let us first collect the imagery, which is remarkably varied and suggestive. The Tares are gathered and burnt. The Bad, inedible Fish are thrown away. The Guest who has not provided himself with a wedding-garment is cast out into the darkness outside the brightly lighted hall; and so are the Virgins who have not provided themselves with oil for their lamps. The man who has not done business with his Pound, or his Talent, has it taken from him; and he also is cast out. Those on the left hand of the Judge who have not used their opportunities of well-doing, go away into eternal punishment. The forgiven Servant who is unforgiving has his pardon cancelled, and is thrown into prison and delivered to the tormentors till such time as he has paid his debt in full. All

these punishments are connected in the parables with the end of the age, represented under different figures. The Tares are not gathered and burnt till the harvest has come, nor is the Wedding-guest expelled till the house is filled, or the Servant who has buried his talent deprived of it till his master returns. And the *end*, thus variously depicted, is no doubt the end of the present age, ἡ συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος, as St. Matthew calls it, using the Greek equivalent of an Aramaic phrase probably used by Christ; the punishment inflicted reaches on into the new order which will then begin, and nothing is said as to any ending of it, unless indeed there should also be an end, as in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant it is dimly hinted, of the sin which is the cause of the punishment.

On the other hand it seems clear that some of the punishments are very much lighter than others. The extreme examples are those of the Tares and the Goats; for the tares are burned, which means (we are told in the interpretation)[1] that those *who make others to stumble* or who *do iniquity* shall be *cast into the furnace of fire*, εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός: and those on the left hand are bidden to *go into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.*[2] Others suffer only exclusion from the light and joy of the heavenly state, or the loss of privileges which they have failed to use. All this seems to indicate a

[1] Mt. xiii. 42. [2] Mt. xxv. 41.

graduated scale of future punishments corresponding to the nature of the offence, and it agrees with what is said elsewhere about one servant being beaten with few and another with many stripes.[1] And this is a consideration which removes to a great extent the sense of unfairness which makes many revolt from the doctrine of future punishments as it is sometimes preached, a doctrine which condemns to one and the same '*hell*' some of the most upright and some of the most wicked of the human race.

It is of great importance to have a clear understanding as to the use of the English word 'hell' and the various Hebrew and Greek words which it represents in the Bible. 'Hell' in Old English is no more than the unseen world of departed spirits, the 'Sheol' of the Hebrews, the 'Hades' of the Greeks. That is of course its sense in the Apostles' Creed, where our Lord is said to have descended into Hell, and it is also its sense even in St. Luke xvi. 23, where our Authorised Version gives *In hell he* (Dives) *lift up his eyes*: meaning not 'in the place of torment,' but simply ἐν τῷ ᾅδῃ, *in the state of departed spirits*. But from Wiclif onwards the word has also been employed by our English translators in the New Testament to translate *Gehenna*, γέεννα, which is used several times by our Lord, with or without the addition *of fire*, τοῦ πυρός. And though this word

[1] Lc. xii. 47 f.

or this phrase does not occur in the parables, there can be no doubt that it was in His mind when He spoke of the tares being cast into *the furnace of fire*, and the goats going away into *the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels*. The notion of the evil being cast into fire connects itself with the Jewish doctrine of a future Ge-Hinnom. As the Valley of Hinnom, below the southern walls of Jerusalem, had in the days of Manasseh blazed with sacrificial fires in which children were offered to Moloch, and as in after days according to Jewish tradition it became the customary place for burning refuse of all kinds, so that the smoke and blaze of constant fires were to be seen there : so in the Jewish imagination the world to come had its Valley of Hinnom, its Gehenna, in which the foulness and rubbish of life was to be finally destroyed. Our Lord adopted this figure of speech to express the spiritual process by which in a future life after the Judgement evil that had survived would be consumed, the process through which evil men must pass after the Judgement.

Here again it is not to be believed that Jesus Christ uses current terms and opinions without intending to convey by them some substantial truth. A material fire is, of course, not to be thought of ; but some spiritual analogue to the scorching, disintegrating, purifying, power of fire to which those must be subjected who have carried with them to the very

judgement-seat of Christ a will still in rebellion against the good and perfect will of God. If it be asked whether this fire is purgatorial, a purgatory however which, unlike the mediaeval conception, will follow the last Judgement, or whether it is just to consume or annihilate, or whether again, it will neither purify nor destroy, but is simply punitive, no very certain answer can be given, and I would deprecate any dogmatic assertion and even any speculation on the subject.[1] It is, our Lord teaches, an *αἰώνιον πῦρ*, an aeonian fire, a *fire that cannot be quenched*, an *ἄσβεστον πῦρ*; but He does not, as far as I can judge, say whether or not souls may, in God's mercy, win their way through it, and come forth with their dross only consumed. All that we know definitely and certainly is that evil cannot dwell in the Kingdom of the Father, or in the Kingdom of the Son, when all things shall have been subjected to Him, and that the means of purification which are now open to us through the Sacrifice of the Cross and the gift of the Spirit are limited in their operation to the present age which ends with the Second Coming of the Lord. If there is still a way of escape, it must be so only by passing through fire.

But if we refuse to dogmatize on this awful subject of future punishments, let us not in our teaching minimize the seriousness of Christ's words upon it.

[1] See p. 157 f.

If we may not add to His words, neither may we take away ; and it is particularly necessary at the present time to guard against the latter temptation, because there is a very general and dangerous tendency to belittle sin and the consequence of sin. And it is of the very essence of Christ's teaching, without which His life and death would be meaningless, to represent sin as the greatest misery which man can suffer : and that except it is repented of and forgiven, the misery of the sinner in the world to come must be as much greater than his present misery, as the spiritual and eternal is greater than the temporal and material.

Future Rewards.

But the parables speak also of future rewards, and to these I gladly turn. We find them everywhere, and they are illustrated with the same abundance of similitude as the punishments of the sinner. The Wheat is gathered into the barn, where it is henceforth kept safe for the Master's use. The Treasure and the Pearl become the permanent possession of the man who sells all to obtain them. The Guests who are prepared and the Virgins who are ready, enter the banqueting hall and are in the presence of the Bridegroom and the Bride. The Servants who have turned to profit their Lord's money, even though it be a single pound, are promoted to places of authority

in His Kingdom, where they can exercise their powers in wider and more responsible fields. Those who have given but a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ for Christ's sake, shall in no wise lose their reward; a place will be found for them all in the eternal Kingdom. No attempt is made in any of these parables to describe the future life of the righteous; there is nothing in the Gospels at all approaching the visions of the Apocalypse. Our Lord, who could have spoken of *heavenly things*, chooses to limit Himself almost entirely to *earthly things*,[1] that is, to such things of the Kingdom of Heaven as can be realized and experienced in this present life. When He comes to that which is beyond present experience, He does not have recourse to apocalyptic symbols, gorgeous and magnificent, but necessarily fantastic and unimaginable: He seems to place a check upon Himself. Being the Master of all Christians He knew that any words of His which went beyond present realization might easily be a source of vain disputing, or idle conjecture in the time to come. For this reason, perhaps, it is that He practises a wise reserve in speaking of the future bliss of the Saints. And yet there is enough in these parables to excite the most lively hopes of the future Church. How many a working life has been cheered and inspired by the ambition of hearing one day from

[1] Jo. iii. 12.

the Master's lips the words *Well done; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* What a wealth of works of charity has been stimulated by the anticipation of His *Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren even these least, ye did it unto Me!* How many a hidden life of struggling with temptation, without a word of counsel or help, without even the cognizance of another human being, has been upheld by the promise, *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father!* There is nothing in all this to excite or to feed curiosity, but there is enough to invigorate and support the Christian in times of stress or strain.

Who is to decide the great Award of eternal chastisement (κόλασις) or eternal life? No word that fell from the lips of Christ could have been more amazing to those who heard Him than His answer to this question. Deliberately, calmly, consistently, He answered it, "I myself." The answer becomes clearer as the end of His life approaches. *The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity*: so much we learn from the interpretation of the Tares. But in the Virgins it is the Bridegroom who excludes; in the Pounds and Talents it is the Master who rewards and punishes; in the Sheep and Goats it is the Son of Man who sits on the throne of judgement and parts

with unerring certainty the one from the other. And in the last case the judgement is not limited to the Church, but extends to the world. The Lord, about in a few hours to stand before His judges in the court of the Sanhedrin, and before the Roman Procurator, and to be condemned by both, sees Himself gathering all nations before His own judgement-seat, and determining the destiny, for the next aeon, of every human soul. If we need an explanation of this scene we shall find it in the Fourth Gospel, where Jesus says, *Neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgement unto the Son . . . He gave Him authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of Man.*[1] Man is to be judged by Man, but by the Man who represents the race, and who is the Word made Flesh. But if the key to the mystery is to be found in St. John, the mystery is already revealed in the Synoptic Gospels, and in the parables, where the Lord quite openly, as His death draws near, proclaims Himself the future Judge of men.

Divine Forgiveness.

Only one of these parables speaks of Divine Forgiveness. It is in another group of parables, which is found only in St. Luke, that this great Christian doctrine finds exposition. The Matthean parable

[1] Jo. v. 22, 27.

of forgiveness deals rather with the responsibilities of the forgiven than with forgiveness itself. Yet the act of forgiveness is represented, and we see both the enormous extent of the debt which the sinner owes to God, and the unconditional fulness of the remission which he receives. This remission of sins, let me remind you, is not postponed to the day of Judgement, nor even to the end of life: it is given on God's part at the beginning of our Christian life and during its course; at the font, in the absolutions of the Church, in answer to the daily prayer *Forgive us our trespasses*. But it is not absolute or final, while we are here; it may be cancelled, it will be cancelled if our conduct shews that we have not the love of God in us. The final absolution is reserved for the judgement-seat of Christ; it is the Master's εὖγε, *Well done*! His *Come, ye blessed of my Father*. And that will be final because it will be based on an unerring judgement formed upon the completed record of each man's life, and because it will correspond with a character matured, proved by temptation, refined by suffering, and after its measure perfected and capable of being fixed in goodness, conformed to the image of the sinless Son of Man Who is also Son of God. Present absolutions have their use in laying the foundation of such a character and helping it on; for it is only in the sense of forgiveness and acceptance that we can live and work

for God. The final absolution of Christ will confirm and complete the absolutions of this life, and those who have received it enter at once into life eternal.

The 'Coming' and the End.

It will be quite clear from what has been said that what our Lord meant by *the Kingdom of Heaven* was largely a present reality, a Sovereignty of God which, even as He preached, was asserting itself in the world, and would, as time went on, assert itself yet more and more, both in individual lives and in national and racial life. Jesus looks beyond His own life-time, to generations to come; He sees the Kingdom filling the world, He sees the messengers of the Kingdom going out into all lands, He sees the long day of work in God's vineyard. But He also foresees an end to all this; the harvest is come, for the growth and ripening have ceased; the invitations are no longer issued, for the house is full; the evening has fallen, and the labourers lay down their tools, and come to receive their wages. And the end cannot be simply explained as the day of each man's death, for in several parables it is distinctly connected with the completion of a whole αἰών or long period of time or succession of generations. It is quite clearly so connected, for instance, in the Parable of the Tares, in the Parable of the Net, in the Parable of the

Sheep and the Goats. And with this end of the age a coming of Jesus Christ is as clearly linked. The servants are bidden to do business with the pounds, *while the Lord is coming*: and when He has *received the Kingdom* which He went to claim, He comes back again. The midnight cry which wakes the Virgins is, *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him. When the Son of Man shall come in His Glory and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all.*

But what *Coming*, what *End*, is to be understood? For we read of more than one *Coming* of the Lord. The Fourth Gospel represents our Lord as coming again by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and in the after life of the Church. *I will not leave you orphans*: *I will come to you*, and much to the same effect in St. John xiv-xvi, is shewn by the context to refer either to the Resurrection or to the Pentecost, perhaps chiefly to the latter. Then, again, He came in another way in the Roman armies which destroyed Jerusalem, and that coming may well have served to the Jewish Christians who escaped as the prelude of the end of the age; for in truth a new order did begin when the Temple and its ritual came to an end, and the ancient people of God was broken up. Hence in the apocalyptic chapters, St. Matthew xxiv, St. Mark xiii, St. Luke xxi, the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age or world are

so closely intertwined that it has always been the crux of interpretation to decide which belong to one event and which to the other. There is little doubt that the first generation made no such distinction; it became clear that our Lord had used the one great crisis as a type of the other. This is seen plainly enough from a comparison of St. Mark xiii. 4 with St. Matthew xxiv. 3; in St. Mark, written before the Fall of Jerusalem, we have the Apostles' question in its original form, *Tell us, when shall these things* (the ruin of the Temple) *be? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?* in St. Matthew, written after the Fall, the latter part of the question takes another form: *Tell us . . . what shall be the sign of Thy coming* (*τῆς σῆς παρουσίας*), *and of the accomplishment of the age?* The change suggests that the editor of the first Gospel looked for a Coming distinct from that of the last days of Jerusalem, and interpreted the question and the discourse accordingly.

In the first generation or two, however, the Lord was expected to come in a few years. There are signs in St. Paul's earlier Epistles that this hope of a speedy Parousia was still entertained, perhaps even by himself. Thus when he writes to the Thessalonians in his earliest extant Epistle, *We that are alive, that are being left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those that are asleep*[1] (*i.e.*

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 15.

dead), it is clear that he thinks it possible that the Lord's Coming may find himself and his generation still alive. In the Second Epistle, indeed, he contemplates some delay; the Day of the Lord will not be *except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed*;[1] and this will take time. Still he probably thought to the end of his life of the Coming, both of Antichrist and of Christ, as impending; *the Lord is at hand*,[2] he writes from Rome about the year sixty. It was long before the belief that the Advent was imminent died out. *Little children*, St. John writes, perhaps thirty years or more after the Fall of Jerusalem, *it is the last hour . . . we know that it is the last hour*.[3] It is not till we reach the late 2 Peter, written in all probability in the second century, that the apparent delay of the Advent is accounted for on the ground that *With the Lord . . . a thousand years* are *as one day*.[4]

But there is no reason to think, as some have thought, that our Lord Himself either suggested or shared the expectation of an immediate Parousia. On the contrary He spoke the Parable of the Pounds for the express purpose of discouraging such an idea,[5] and He laid great emphasis on our entire ignorance of the day and the hour, or even the season (the epoch in human history) when He should come, an

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 3. [2] Phil. iv. 5. [3] 1 Jo. ii. 18.
[4] 2 Pet. iii. 8. [5] Lc. xix. 11.

ignorance which He declared that He Himself shared : *Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*[1] But this He knew, and has plainly taught us in these parables, that the whole course of history, the whole work of converting the world to the faith, the whole preparation of the Bride, *i.e.* the disciplining and sanctification of the elect, must precede the end, and therefore delay the Parousia which He connects with the end.

But what is the nature of this future Coming of the Lord, as it presented itself to the mind of Christ Himself ? We must beware, I think, of unduly pressing realistic descriptions in which our Lord either quotes the Book of Daniel, or uses forms of speech familiar to the Jews through other late writings such as the Book of Enoch. When, for example, He says to the High Priest, *Ye shall see the Son of Man coming on* (or *with*) *the clouds of heaven*,[2] He clearly adopts the words of Dan. vii. 13, and it is unnecessary to suppose that He expected them to be literally fulfilled in His own case. Allowance must probably be made, to a much greater extent than has been usual among Christians, for the use of symbolical and traditional language of this kind in prophecies of an event so entirely beyond human experience. Just as we do

[1] Mc. xiii. 32. [2] Mt. xxvi. 64 ; Mc. xiv. 62.

not look for a bridal procession such as that which the Parable of the Virgins depicts, or a glorious human Form seated on a great white throne, so, I conceive we are not bound to think that our Lord expected or taught a visible descent in the clouds. All such descriptive phrases may belong to the symbolism, and not to the inner reality, of the Parousia. It would be as unwise to press them on the acceptance of persons who cannot receive them, as it would be to refuse to use them in our intercourse with simple folk to whom they still convey the only idea of the Coming which they can comprehend, or with intelligent people who understand that these details are symbols of grave truths. But whatever view we may take of the descriptions of the Parousia, it is essential that as Christian teachers we hold fast by the hope of the Lord's Coming, and connect it, as Christ did, with a final judgement of men, and a transition from the present order to the next, the beginning of a new age. This much at least our Lord without a doubt held and taught, and if so, His disciples cannot let it go. There is a time coming, it may be near or far off, God only knows, when there will be a great manifestation of the Incarnate Risen Lord to the whole world, and that manifestation of God in Man will be the final Judgement of the world, just as in less degree the world was judged when He came in the flesh; whenever it comes, there will

come with it that sorting of all men, and parting them according to character, which on a small scale goes forward now wherever Christ is preached. In that great flash of spiritual light which the final revelation of Jesus Christ will bring, all men will stand revealed even to themselves, and henceforth they will take their places accordingly. So much, at least, lies behind the symbolism of the Parousia (the Advent); so much, at least, we must think, our Lord meant to teach when He spoke of the Son of Man coming in the glory of His Father to judge all the nations of the earth. How much more in His teaching may find its fulfilment in fact, how much belongs to the apocalyptic language of the age, it is perhaps impossible to say: meanwhile we do well to use the words we find in the Gospels, leaving it to the event to shew all that they mean. What I have set before you is the *minimum*, yet it is magnificent, tremendous, enthralling. In the light of the Coming we see ourselves daily approaching the judgement-seat of Christ. This life is deciding our place in the next, and our place in the next will be revealed by the manifold Presence of the Lord. The light of that Presence, the X-ray of the spiritual world, will shine through every life and heart, laying bare the purposes of men as well as their most secret actions, piercing, as the writer to the Hebrews says,[1]

[1] Heb. iv. 12.

even to *the dividing of soul and spirit.* So at length the κρίσις, the judgement of our lives, will have come together with the Coming of our Lord.

I stop here. We have by no means exhausted the teaching even of these Parables of the Kingdom. But we have gone far enough to see how full they are of instruction no less necessary for our own time than for the generation to which they were spoken. Men need to-day, as in *the days of His flesh*,[1] to be initiated into *the mysteries of the Kingdom* which the Parables of the Kingdom at once conceal and reveal. Into these mysteries we shall be able to lead them just so far as we have been initiated into them ourselves. Hence the need to struggle by personal meditation and prayer, with the inner meaning of the parables which we would give to men. They must yield their treasures to us before they will yield them through us to others. We must be initiated, μύσται, ourselves first, guides into the truths, μυσταγωγοί, afterwards. Into this preparation all the knowledge we can acquire, and above all, the growing experience of life, will enter; lengthening years, instead of exhausting, will add to the resources of the Parables. The Parables will bring to us, and therefore to others through us, little or much, according to what we bring to them.

[1] Heb. v. 7.

When the Lord had finished the seven Parables of St. Matthew xiii, He is reported by the Evangelist as having asked His disciples, *Have ye understood all these things?* And when they eagerly replied *Yea Lord*, He answered, *Therefore every scribe that hath been made a disciple to the Kingdom of Heaven* (*i.e.* every disciple who has heard both the wisdom of the older order, and also the secrets of the Kingdom, and so is fit to be a teacher in the Church) *is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

I leave these words with you to-day. In the Parables of Jesus Christ we have a treasure committed to us, out of which, as long as we serve the priest's office, it will be our business, and it may be our delight, *to bring forth things new and old*—καινὰ καὶ παλαιά—the old truths, even the old stories, and yet these truths, these stories, by the alchemy of Christ's Spirit in us, ever new.

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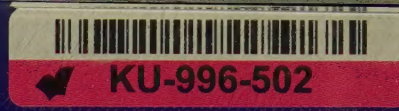
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